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THE PODESTA'S DAUGHTER

AND OTHER

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE
PODESTA'S DAUGHTER

AND OTHER

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

BY

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Author of "Calaynos," "Anne Boleyn," "The Betrothal," &c.

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THE
PODESTA'S DAUGHTER:

A DRAMATIC SKETCH.

SCENE. *Before and within the gate of an Italian Church-yard. Enter, as if from the wars, DUKE ODO, VINCENZO, and a train of men-at-arms.*

DUKE ODO. (*Dismounting.*)

HARK you, Vincenzo; here will I dismount.
Lead on Falcone to the castle. See
He lack no provender or barley-straw
To ease his battered sides. Poor war-worn horse!
When last we galloped past this church-yard gate
He was a colt, gamesome and hot of blood,
Bearing against the bit until my arm

Ached with his humors. Mark the old jade now—
He knows we talk about him—a mere boy
Might ride him bare-backed. Give my people note
Of my approach, and tell them, for yourself,
I will not look too strictly at my house :
An absent lord trains careless servitors.
I wish no bonfires lighted on the hills,
No peaceful cannon roused to mimic wrath;
Say, I have seen cities burn, and shouting ranks
Of solid steel-clad footmen melt away
Before a hundred pieces. Say I come
For rest, not jollity; and all I seek
Is a calm welcome in their lighted eyes,
And quiet murmurs that appear to come
More from the heart than lips. Remember this.
Yon old gray man who wanders through the tombs,
Like Time among his spoils, is the first face,
Of all the many strange ones we have passed,
That I can call by name : I'll question him.
See Marco's bed be soft. Let him be laid
In the south turret, close beside my room :
His wound aches cruelly. I must not forget
The cry of love with which he dashed between

My broken corslet and the Frenchman's spear.
There, lead Falcone gently. Loose his girth;
Unhook his curb. He ever fretted thus
To part from me.

VINCENZO.

Lord! signor, here's a task!

First, lead this furious devil to his crib,
Throttle the cannon, blow the bonfires out,
Tell o'er another Iliad of your fights—
A hundred battles to Achilles' one;
Keep down such yells of joy as might outbrave
The lungs of thunder; make a bed for Marco—
A soft bed, bless me!—the outrageous bear
Would growl, like Cerebus, if he were laid
Upon the cloudy couch of amorous Venus.
Then—Well, you say it, and—

DUKE ODO.

You will obey;
Bettering my plans with your inventive brain:
Only there must be hinderances enough
To heighten your good service. Fare you well!

(VINCENZO *and the train ride on towards the castle,*
DUKE ODO *enters the churchyard, and approaches*
the PODESTA.

Good even, signor!

PODESTA.

Welcome! An old man
May fitly bid you welcome here; for I,
Standing upon this graveyard, sometimes feel
Like an unseized inheritor who treads
Hereditary acres, long kept back.
I am next heir to this domain of death:
Ere many days, I'll come with funeral pomp
To claim my full possession. Welcome, then;
No breach of hospitality shall prove
My right unworthy. I was thinking thus—
Framing such salutation for a guest—
While you stood in the gateway.

DUKE ODO.

Merry sadness!

PODESTA.

Ay, signor, 'tis as well as weeping mirth.

Laughter and tears! their issue is the same;
One treads upon the other's flying heels,
Heaven takes up each into its steady breast,
Life rolls along beyond the power of both,
And either is soon over.

DUKE ODO.

True as sad.

I pray, Podesta—

PODESTA.

How! You know my office?

DUKE ODO.

One at the gate informed me.

PODESTA.

Who were they—

Those horsemen that went clattering up the street?
You wall concealed them.

DUKE ODO.

Servants of the castle.

PODESTA.

What a rude stir the lazy varlets made!

'Tis now all play with them. The duke's abroad,
Battering down castles, while malicious time
Is busy with his own. He'll find neglect
Makes as sad breaches as his cannon-balls.
The whole world rots together, men and things;
That's comforting to mortals.

DUKE ODO.

How the graves
Have thickened here!

PODESTA.

Ay, truly; and should man
Consent to leave these landmarks of the dead
Stand a few centuries, he would make his home
Within the peopled cities of decay;
And the bewildered swain, furrowing the fields,
Would drive his plough zig-zag between the stones
In sowing-time.

DUKE ODO.

This consecrated ground,
Within my memory, was an open field.
Here I have seen the golden heads of grain
Shaken together in an autumn gust;

Where yon ambitious marble lifts its pile
Of sculptured trophies, I have seen the peasant
With hearty, laughing labor strike his spade
To found the May-pole: glancing eyes and feet,
Timed to the lute and rattling castanet,
Figures of rustic grace and rustic strength,
Gaudy with flaring ribbons, I have seen
Whirled in a transient frenzy round and round
That festal tree. Where is the ripened grain?
Yonder the spade was struck, with heavier heart,
For other purposes; and other sounds
Than May-day dance and music have been heard
Around the crusted sculptures of that tomb.
Alas! the very flowers which twined the pole
Have turned to marble; colorless and sad
They stiffen round yon column, and appear
Such flowers as winter, in a jealous mood,
Might breed upon the bosom of his snows,
In mockery of spring. Where are the forms
Of maiden beauty and of manly power
That crushed the tender grass beneath their feet?
Sleep they in their own footsteps? Does the grass
Grow over them secure? The votive wreath,

Hanging upon the headstone of this grave,
Perchance conceals a name which one time passed
From lip to lip like cheering news; the eyes
Of young and old grew bright with heart-born ease,
To hear her foot-fall on the cottage-floor;
And some, no doubt, burned with a warmer fire
That smouldered shyly, and went out unseen—
An inner torture. Let me raise the garland.
“Giulia,” and nothing more. Whose grave is this?

PODESTA.

My daughter's.—Heaven protect your life! how pale,
How very pale you turn!

DUKE ODO.

What, I?—indeed?—

Well, well, I am a soldier, and my wounds
Will twinge sometimes. Besides, I felt a shock
Recoil upon me, at my sudden burst
Into your sacred grief. Pray pardon me.—
Whose tomb is that?—yonder great, haughty work
That seems to rise, like purse-puffed insolence,
Among the humbler grave-stones, crying, “See,
Even in death I keep my wonted state!”

PODESTA.

Signor, you wrong the dead. The clay beneath
Asked only to be tombed in open ground,
Where the deep sky might stretch above his head,
The bright flowers grow, and the south breezes bring
A noise of running waters, and a gush
Of drowsy murmurs, rustling through the trees,
Forever round him. 'Twas his fancy. He
Shuddered with horror when the thought would come
Of his ancestral crypts, where daylight turned
Into an oozy dampness, worse than night.
“How shall I lie with patience all the years
Earth has in store for her, beneath a place
At which my dullest instincts cower with fear?
Lay me beneath the sun,” he ever said.
Age has its toys, like childhood; this was his.
So, when he died, through superstitious dread—
But more through love—with smothered discontent,
They laid him there, and piled that pompous mass—
Which wrongs the spirit of his last request—
High over him. That tomb is old Duke Odo's.

DUKE ODO.

Heaven rest his soul!

PODESTA.

Amen ! My Giulia loved him—
Though she had little reason—to the last.

DUKE ODO.

How long has she been dead ?

PODESTA.

Why—let me see.
Since young Count Odo buckled on his arms—
He is the duke now, but I still forget—
Is nigh a score of years : my daughter died
A twelvemonth from the day he journeyed hence.
Oh, weary time ! And Ugo, too, is dead ;
Daughter and son are lying side by side :
The fruit has fallen, but the old trunk stands,
Forlorn and barren, rooted yet in life.
'Tis a long story ; would you hear it all ?
Past griefs are garrulous, and slighted age
Is pleased to listen to its own thin voice.
Sit there on Giulia's grave—the sod is fresh—
I'll find a seat on Hugo's.

DUKE ODO.

Nay, nay, signor ;

A maiden's grave is of choice sanctity :

I'll stand and listen.

PODESTA.

Please yourself ; I'll sit.

This tale could not be told to every ear ;—

Though, after all, 'tis a mere history

Of how a maiden lived, how loved, how died :

A simple matter, such as gossips vex

Our sleepy ears with round a winter's fire.

Yet, for all this, a sympathetic heart,

Like that you seem to own, is only fit

To hold the pure distilment of such tears

As early sorrow sheds. Shall I go on ?

Or do I blunder in my thought of you ?

DUKE ODO.

Of me ! O heaven ! (*Aside.*) No, no.

PODESTA.

Well, let me think.

On her twelfth birthday my child, Giulia—

I now may say it, she is dead so long—

Was fairer than the rose she loved so much,
White as the lily were her virgin thoughts,
Her pride as humble as the violet ;
Her fancies trained as easily as the vine
That loves a strong support to grow around,
And grows not upward, if not upward held :
So all her pliant nature leaned upon
Me and her brother, Ugo. Sweeter far
Than rose or lily, violet or vine,
Though they could gather all their charms in one,
Was the united being of my child,
Just as she stepped beyond her childish ways,
And lightly trod the paths of womanhood.
Only there was this one defect in her—
If a half beauty may be called defect—
She was too rare, too airy, too refined,
Too much of essence, and too little flesh,
For the rude struggles of rough-handed earth.
Even her very life seemed bound to her
By frailer tenures than belong to us.
There was no compact between heaven and earth
Regarding her. She had no term to live,
No time to die. Within her life and death

Seemed ever striving for the mastery;
And she on either smiled with equal cheer.
She was a product of her native air,
Born from the breath of flowers, the dews of night,
The balm of morning, the melodious strains
That haunt our twilight, waning with the moon.
Each unsubstantial thing took form in her;
Even her country's sun had shot its fire
Through all her nature, and burnt deeply down
Into her soul:—Here was the curse of all!
Count Odo—mark the contrast—so we called,
Through ancient courtesy, the old duke's son—
Came from the Roman breed of Italy.
A hundred Cæsars poured their royal blood
Through his full veins. He was both flint and fire;
Haughty and headlong, shy, imperious,
Tender, disdainful, tearful, full of frowns—
Cold as the ice on *Ætna's* wintry brow,
And hotter than its flame. All these by turns.
A mystery to his tutors and to me—
Yet some have said his father fathomed him—
A mystery to my daughter, but a charm
Deeper than magic. Him my daughter loved.—

DUKE ODO.

Loved ! Are you sane ?

PODESTA.

The thing seems strange enough,
That love should draw my tender flutterer
Around this jetting flame ; but so it was.
She loved so truly, and she flew so near—
But I forestall the end.

DUKE ODO.

Oh, misery ! (*Aside.*)

PODESTA.

My functions drew me to the castle oft,
Thither sometimes my daughter went with me ;
And I have noticed how young Odo's eyes
Would light her up the stairway, lead her on
From room to room, through hall and corridor,
Showing her wonders, which were stale to him,
With a new strangeness : for familiar things,
Beneath her eyes, grew glorified to him,
And woke a strain of boyish eloquence,
Dressed with high thoughts and fluent images,
That sometimes made him wonder at himself,

Who had been blind so long to every charm
Which her admiring fancy gave his home.
Often I caught them standing rapt before
Some barbarous portrait, grim with early art—
A Gorgon, to a nicely balanced eye,
That scarcely hinted at humanity ;
Yet they would crown it with the port of Jove,
Make every wrinkle a heroic scar,
And light that garbage of forgotten times
With such a legendary halo, as would add
Another lustre to the Golden Book.
At first the children pleased me ; many a laugh,
That reddened them, I owed their young romance.
But the time sped, and Giulia ripened too,
Yet would not deem herself the less a child :
And when I clad me for the castle, she
Would deck herself in her most childish gear,
And lay her hand in mine, and tranquilly
Look for the kindness in my eyes. She called
Odo her playfellow—"The little boy
Who showed the pictures, and the blazoned books,
The glittering armor and the oaken screen,
Grotesque with wry-faced purgatorial shapes

Twisted through all its leaves and knotted vines ;
And the grand, solemn window, rich with forms
Of showy saints in holiday array
Of green, gold, red, orange, and violet,
With the pale Christ who towered above them all
Dropping a ruby splendor from his side.”
She told how “ Odo—silly child !—would try
To catch the window’s glare upon her neck,
Or her round arms ;” and how “ the flatterer vowed
The gleam upon her temple seemed to pale
Beside the native color of her cheek.”
Prattle like this enticed me to her wish,
Though cooler reason shook his threatening hand,
And counseled flat denial. Till at length
Ugo, my son, stung by the village taunts
Which the duke’s menials had set going round,
Grew sad and moody with an inward shame,
That soon ran over in a wrathful stream
Of most unfilial censure. “ Look you, sir,”—
Beating his sword-hilt with his furious hand
Till blade and scabbard rang like clashing brands—
“ This never shall be said ! By Mary’s tears,
I’ll cleave the next bold slanderer to the beard !

And you, sir—you who are the cause of it—
Look that your house be stainless. Breed no trulls
For your liege lord; or if you needs must pimp,
Look farther from your home!" Here was a strait!
The partial justice of his hot rebuke
Pardoned its disrespect, and sealed my lips
Against reproaches: so I stammered out,
"Ugo, you rave." "Rave! only look to it,
Or I may rave in action!" Down the hall,
Black as a thunder-cloud, he swept along,
Darkening the way before him. I awoke.
The shameful fear stood imminent; even now
Might be an age too late. But though delayed,
Duty must be no reckoner of time;
An act good once is good forever. So,
When Giulia sought me for the usual walk,
I put her tears and her aside together;
Not sternly, kindly, but inflexibly.
Then all at once that rapid sorcerer,
The human heart, lit a new light within her.
Still as life may be, flushed from brow to breast
With modest scarlet, by my side she paused,
Tracing the mazes of bewildered thoughts.

I turned and left her; yet whene'er I stopped
And cast a backward glance, fixed as before,
Her eyes inverted on her inner self,
And all her senses idle, Giulia stood,
Seeming her own excelling counterfeit.
Some strange thing stirred within her, that was plain;
So I, with just the sapience of our race,
Set my poor wits to reasoning down my fears.
Half up the hill, Count Odo, like a stag
Lured by the mimicked bleating of his doe,
Burst from the bushes, and before me stood
With such a wonder as the antlered king
Must feel before the hunter. Not a word
Nor sign of greeting did he make to me:
One flash of his dark eyes along the path—
A look which crossed my person as if I
Were rock, or tree, or mere transparent air—
And then his haughty nature towered aloft,
Magnificent as sunrise, calm as fate.
Back through the thicket, deigning not to part
The netted branches with his hand, he strode,
Wrapped in the grandeur of his boundless pride.
But other shapes his refluent passion took

Ere his heart settled; for the servants said
The house became a bedlam. In his wrath
He slashed the pictures which poor Giulia loved,
Tore up the missals, hacked the carved screen,
And with his impious hand sheer through the glass
Of the great window—through the very Christ—
Hurled a great oaken settle, overweight
For two stout yeomen. Said the old duke naught?
Yes, merely this—"Let all the pictures hang,
Spread out the books, cover the screen no more,
Let heaven have entrance through the broken panes:
These wrecks shall be Count Odo's monuments—
The guide-posts pointing him to better things."
And he was wise. Ugo seemed pleased awhile;
For Giulia was dumb about the castle.
I went and came, but never saw my child
Standing upon our threshold for my hand,
As in days past; and when Count Odo's name
Came up at table, not a word from her
Who once would leap, like lightning, at that sound,
And bear it off triumphant from our lips,
Ringling his praises till her listeners tired:
Only, at times, I caught a shy, quick glance

Of bashful cunning glittering in her eyes,
As covertly, under her downcast brows,
She shot them round her. Her familiar cares,
The usual duties of our small abode,
Were duly ordered. Her accustomed walks,
At morn and evening, through the forest path
Whereon she sowed her little charities
Among the woodmen, and reaped golden stores
Of grateful smiles, were taken as of old.
Sometimes, indeed, I marked a peevish haste
When aught delayed her, and a curt rebuff
When I or Ugo proffered company;
And sometimes from these walks she would return
With something heavy at her heart, a grief
That often rose to her convulséd lips,
And then dropped backward to her heart again.
I counted this a shadow, cast on her
By the distressful sights of poverty
Within the forest; and I talked at large,
In the smooth, flowing phrases of the rich—
When their world-wide philanthropy unlocks
The liberal mouth, and seals the pocket up:
In good round sentences I held discourse

On the huge evils of our social state,
And theorized, and drew fine instances,
Until the starving beggar at my door
Was clean forgotten. I cajoled the poor,
I flattered them, I called them God's own care ;
Asked how the ravens fed ? The smitten rock,
The quails and manna, were rare figures : thus
I shifted all the burden on the Lord,
And felt the lighter.—I have changed since then.
My daughter listened ; but, at times, I feared
Her mind was far away, and all my words
Buzzed in her ears, like a crone's spinning-wheel,
That only chimes in with her vagrant thoughts,
Unheard until the slighted threads divide,
And startle her with silence. Giulia, thus,
Would rise with something like a guilty pang,
And busy her about the household work,
Leaving my words unquestioned. So things went
Till generous autumn shook his jolly torch
Around the land, and seared the rusty grass,
And scorched the trees, and shook their fruitage down,
And piled the dripping wains with purple grapes,
And turned the year into a jubilee.

Then Ugo in all sadness came to me,
Flushed with the chase, yet redder dyed with shame,
And in the pauses of his sighs told this :
A wounded boar, flying before his spear,
Forsook the closer covert of the wood
And, mad with terror, harrowed through the glades,
Trailing his life behind him. Towards the town,
Followed by Ugo and his baying hounds,
The forest ruffian sped ; but when the dogs
Laid their hot muzzles to his straining flank,
Into the open road he plunged amain,
And scoured the peaceful pathway. Naught availed ;
His shadow kept not closer than the pack.
His strength gave way, and Ugo's crusted spear
Again was busy in his bristling side,
When, swerving from a blow, with sudden dart
He cleared the road, drove through a copse of oaks,
And Ugo heard a woman scream. O joy !
O sorrow ! turning what we take as joy
Into thy own sad likeness, how is man
Balanced between ye ! And what heart may say
"This thing is pleasure," till its fleeting sense
Be past and gone forever ? Ugo stood,

As if Medusa stared him in the face,
Breast-high amid the coppice, and beheld
Beneath a patriarchal oak Count Odo stand,
With one strong hand upholding Giulia,
While in the other flashed his wary brand,
Cutting and thrusting at the desperate boar.

DUKE ODO.

I passed that spot, threading the forest path,
An isle of greensward in a sea of leaves;
“Here,” cried I, gazing on a stricken oak
Whose mouldering remnants told of greatness gone—
“Here the avenging hand of God has struck,
In lightning and in thunder reaching down!
Yon ghastly culprit, lopped of every limb,
His bark curled upward in a hundred scrolls,
His fruitless acorns filled with barren dust,
Points to a crime as clearly advertised
As if a herald blew it to the wind.”
My thought was just; two hearts were here betrayed
While heaven was near them. But did Ugo leave
These hapless children to the raging beast?

PODESTA.

Help was not needed. Ugo's hunter eye
Saw in that hand a weapon overmatch
For a bayed boar, without the hounds that hung
Still tugging at the monster's brindled haunch :
So, undiscovered, from the wood he turned,
And bore the heavy secret home to me.
Why rage did not o'ercome him in that hour,
Why he, in wonted fury, did not slay
The two together, is heaven's mystery.
Shame—loathful, cruel, degrading, abject shame—
That quite unmanned him, this alone was his;
No thought of vengeance. “She may yet be pure,”
Said Ugo; and the misery of a thought
That dared suppose her other, bowed his head,
Crimson with meaning, to his outstretched palm :
“If she is not, Count Odo lives one hour ;”
And he glanced sideways at the horologe.
Soon Giulia came ; our fears might breathe awhile.
She heard with patience, and replied with tears,
Heightening her fault, and taking Odo's blame.
“The guilt is mine,” she said ; “I met him still :
I staid not to be wooed, I went for it.

I knew it to be wicked, but I bore
The crime for its strange sweetness. Woe is me!
That sin has bounties, while poor virtue starves.”
I reasoned with her, setting love aside,
That young Count Odo never could be hers;
I showed the gulf between our wide estates;
I said a dukedom could not wed a plot
Of narrow acres; and I raised a fear
Of dismal vengeance, from the old duke's hand,
Upon my head. Count Odo, even he,
Treated with justice merely, must endure
Some direful grief. At this she blanched and shook.
I balanced chances with the nicest art:
“What if the duke consent, would Odo too—
That hot proud boy who from his regal height
Looks, like an eagle, down upon the world—
Would he—ha! ha!—lead such a bride as you—
A new Giralda—to the altar-stone?
Why, child, the pathway between home and church
Would show more perils than the Cretan maze.”
Then I advised her. “Daughter, be content
With heaven's appointment; humbly walk the ground,
Nor fly your fancies where you cannot follow;

He is as far above you as the stars.”
This she believed; nought was too high for him,
Nothing too low for her, compared with him.
But when I named the danger of such loves,
How reason can be melted in the glow
Of tempted passion, when I almost spoke
In broad, blunt terms, as Ugo spoke to me—
So hard it was to make my meaning clear—
All the proud innocence of woman’s soul
Bounded aloft in dreadful majesty;
And such indignant eloquence outburst,
At the gross taunt, that I, by helpless signs,
Was glad to beg her mercy. Well, the end
Of this long tossing to and fro of words,
Was that my daughter, bowing to my will
With that obedience she had ever shown,
Promised to shun Count Odo from that hour.
She kept her faith; though Odo came by day
With missions from the castle that outsummed
His several hairs, and were of less respect;
Though, in the evening, I have seen his form
Skirting the roadside where my daughter took
Her silent walk with Ugo; though the night,

From nocturns unto cock-crow, could not rest
For the unceasing tinkle of his lute,
And such faint scraps of doleful melody
As he might venture with his trembling voice.
Now a new fear began. His father's eyes
Could not have missed Count Odo's altered ways;
And soon dread proof was given of what a man,
Good in all else, would forfeit to uphold
The periled lustre of his heritage.
Ugo and Giulia, in a lonesome place,
By a masked ruffian were assailed; and though
Both mask and sweeping cloak gave Ugo odds
Against the villain, there was stirring work,
And wounds on both sides. Had not Giulia's voice,
Shrieking in terror at the bloody sight,
Prevailed more surely than brave Ugo's sword,
Heaven knows what purpose might have been achieved.
The vintage came, with it the festival;
And, strange to say, Duke Odo left his books,
To throw a chilling stiffness on the dance
With his unusual presence. How my heart
Shrank into nothing, when the aged duke,
Tottering along the greensward, slowly came

Before my daughter, and with gallant words—
Stranger than roses in December's snow—
Lightly among the dancers led my child.
“Ugo,” I whispered, “in the name of heaven,
Stand near your sister—hear the duke's discourse—
Perhaps he'll traffic in his son's behalf.
That girl is doomed past saving!” Ugo said,
“Let him but trade with me; I'll name a price
To stagger his whole dukedom!” By and by,
With smiles and nods and gentle courtesies,
The duke returned to me. I almost snatched
My startled daughter from his outstretched hand;
And as the rustics cheered him to his horse,
Through the confusion, on the wings of fear,
I fled with Giulia; nor till bolt and bar
Rang in their sockets, and I saw the spear
And rusted sword, I bore awhile in Spain,
Felt I the safer. Ugo came behind:
He had heard nothing but the common talk
Twixt high and humble;—questions from the duke,
And meek replies from Giulia. Once, indeed,
He wheeled his ponderous learning slowly round
To bear upon her knowledge; and seemed pleased

To find she knew this planet is a sphere,
Gold not a salt, and spirit not a substance ;
That nature's movements are through various laws,
Diverse, and yet harmonious : but when she,
Radiant with faith, proclaimed the central light,
Without which reason were a helpless drudge,
From which, and to which, all creation flows,
And called it God :—Ah ! there her soul had flown
A league beyond his books ; and from that thought
The fool and the philosopher might start
On equal ground. The duke was still awhile.
Then they talked o'er the poets—Petrarch's love,
And Laura's coyness, Tasso's holy war,
And the stupendous Florentine. Just here
The duke's smiles grew most fatherly, and here
The dance was ended. "Saw you not," said Ugo,
"Count Odo join his father near the wood?"
"In good faith, no !" That question had upset
My growing confidence. "Some plot is here—
Some plot to be outplotted." "Have her wed—
Ay, wed her to a clod, a slave, a beast—
To anything that can be made a groom ;
But keep her honest !" Ugo shouted forth.

“A wise thought! Call your sister.” Giulia came.
A little hope was fluttering in her heart,
And warming one small spot on either cheek;
That died away, and never woke again,
At my first sentence. “Marry!”—she was firm—
“Not all that cowards fear—not all the pangs
This groaning earth has borne since man left Eden—
Not all the cheating baits of fruitful sense—
Ambition’s crown, toil’s gain, fame’s tainted breath—
Not all the spirit dreams of future bliss—
No, nor the dictate of the holy church—
The pope’s commandment, barbed with every ill
That may be thundered from Saint Peter’s chair—
Should fright, bribe, master, or so far corrupt
The heart which God assigned her to keep pure!”
She spoke this with her virgin eyes aflame,
Blazing like Mars when he has clomb the sky,
And looks down hotly from his sovereign height.
I talked to her until the daylight wore,
And evening lent its pathos to my words,
Of what a daughter owes a parent’s love—
And I had been both parents joined in one;
Of the great blessing which her mother laid

Upon her infant's forehead, as she stood
Upon the verge of Paradise and saw,
Forward and backward, heaven and earth at once.
Would she be false to that? Move saintly eyes;
And wet the golden floor of heaven with tears?
I showed the duke's omnipotent command;
The long and sweeping arm of potentates;
The feeble shield of justice, when the voice
Of poor, oppressed humanity is drowned
In the loud roar of an impending doom.
I made my gray hairs plead to her. I talked
Of Ugo's blighted prospect, and the fate
Which hung above us, sure to fall at last;
Talked till my passion worked me into tears,
And she gave way—not slowly, all at once,
With desperate haste. “Do with me what you will;
But oh! in pity, get me to my grave
As soon as may be. Life is wearying me;
I would have rest from that which is within,”
Said Giulia; and her shaking hand she laid,
With a low plaintive sob, upon her heart.
I offered comfort. “You shall not be wed”—
“No, by the saints!” roared Ugo, bursting through

A flood of running tears. "Only, my child,
We'll meet their arts with arts. We'll gossip round
That thou hast been betrothed. Some village beau—
Florio, thy cousin, will be proud of it—
Shall be a frequent suitor at my house;
And he shall be thy company to mass—
He'll spread thy cushion with a tender care,
I warrant me!" and then I tried to laugh.
"Why here's a plot to found a play upon!—
Thou didst like Florio." "I shall hate him now,"
Giulia replied; and her eyes glared at me
With steely lustre, a blank outer light.
"Give me but time. Just lead the duke astray
Until I put my goods in proper trim,
And we will fly the country, and his wrath,
If nothing better offer." Giulia raised
The hollow spectre of a long lost smile,
And went her way.

DUKE ODO.

There was a murder done!

PODESTA.

It may be, signor; but my acts were squared,

Both to my daughter's interest and the duke's,
As well as my poor judgment would allow.

DUKE ODO.

Forgive my comment, and resume the tale.

PODESTA.

The rumored marriage reached Count Odo's ears.
'Twas said, at first, he doubted ; but his pride,
Now he was older, and held firmer rein
Above his passions, did not vent itself
In chilling looks and following agonies :
The pictures, books, screen, window, well had taught
Their storied lesson. Marble calmness now,
A mien that never altered with the times,
Was his high state. But when the rumor grew
A settled matter, and the people talked
Of Florio and Giulia in one breath,
Coupling their names as if they could not part,
Count Odo kindled. In a forest path
He came on Florio. Face to face they stood.
Florio in terror, and the scornful eyes
Of Odo ranging him from head to foot.
He spoke at last—" Florio,"—his voice was soft

As the south wind—"Florio, the world has said
You are betrothed to Giulia; is it true?"
Then the habitual lie was stammered forth.
Awhile Count Odo's hand upon his sword
Hung, like a mountain pard upon the spring,
And the long veins went twisting through his neck,
Swollen with torture; but some power within
Wrested the clenched hand sharply from the sword,
And his face calmed, and a most lordly smile
Lit up his features, as he cried aloud,
In strong, firm accents, like a martyr might—
"God bless you, Florio!" and burst in tears.
'Twas the old fight twixt heaven and hell renewed,
And, as of old, the battle-field was pitched
Within the heart of man. Count Odo left
Ere Florio could catch his scattered thoughts.
On the next day a blare of trumpets woke
The drowsy village, in scarce time to see
The rearward horsemen of a warlike band
Vanish within the forest. Some one said,
"That is Count Odo riding to the wars."
The wars have gone against us: since that day
Thousands of hostile spears have ever lain

Between Count Odo and his distant home.
Sometimes for years in cities he was pent,
Sometimes in adverse battles he engaged,
Sometimes he skirmished through a long retreat,
Hanging between the enemy's flushed van
And the down-hearted soldiers of our rear;
But never has a rumor of his name—
For the foe barred direct intelligence—
Reached us uncoupled from the words of praise.
His father died—

DUKE ODO.

And knew not the deceit?

PODESTA.

How could he know? He died before my child,
Pining, 'twas whispered, for his absent son.
Within a month poor Giulia followed him:
I can recall the time like yesterday.
A low fog lay upon the sodden land,
And on my spirits; from the sluggish clouds,
That trailed their ragged skirts along the hills,
Thick, moody showers were falling now and then;
And when they ceased, the poplars, drop by drop,

Kept their sad chime awake upon the roof.
Since Odo left us, Giulia had walked
Her birth-place like a stranger. All the world,
Its sights of beauty clustering round her feet,
And all the mystery that hung above
In the deep blue of heaven, seemed alien now ;
Their power and their significance were gone.
The sun burnt out before her like a torch
Before a blind girl, and within her sight
The brightest moon was blurred by dim eclipse.
She seemed forever lost in solemn thoughts :
Yet when we questioned what she mused upon,
“Nothing,” she said, and I believed it true ;
For strongest grief is thoughtless, and retains
Only a stupid sense of pain, no form,
Or else we should go mad. Ugo, the while,
Softened his nature to a woman’s ways,
And through the house he went, with silent speed,
Forestalling Giulia in her wonted cares ;
Or in the garden walk some flower she loved,
In happier times, he planted full of bloom,
And smiled to see her bending o’er the bush,
Even with her vacant eyes : but I have marked,

When thus her memory stirred, the flower was wet
With other drops than morning's. As the year
Rounded to winter, Giulia's cheek assumed
A kindred color with the falling leaf,
And her eyes brightened, and her thin white hands
Grew thinner yet, her footstep lost its spring,
And life seemed beating a slow-paced retreat
From all its outposts. Just before the day—
The irksome, dismal day—of which I spoke,
She looked as if her frame had suddenly
Crumbled away beneath her, though its life
Still haunted round her heart. She knew her state,
And called us to her. "Father, first to you,
I have no blame, nothing but thanks to give,
And dying blessings. Ugo, so to you,
Who bore the wayward tricks of my disease
With so much kindness, such unfaltering love"—
God bless her, she was patient as a saint!—
"I do not ask the motives of your acts;
For since you chose them, they must be the best.
I have one word to leave behind me—hark!
I loved Count Odo, and I die for it.
This ring, which slides about my finger so,

He gave me once—pray bury it with me.
But I beseech you—ay, you promise me
Before I ask it; that is very kind—
If Odo should return, to make him know
That I by deed, or word, or sign, or thought,
Was never false to him. And tell him, too,
Into the grave, with this one pledge of love,
I go rejoicing; and he'll see it shine
Upon my finger thus in Paradise.
Odo, dear Odo—father—brother—God,
Have mercy on me!" And she closed her eyes,
Shutting the world forever from her sight.
Soldier, you weep!

DUKE ODO.

Weep! am I stone, old man?
O shallow reason! O deep heart of youth!
What fearful issue has your conflict wrought!
O father, blinder than the burrowing mole,
To trust the mere deductions of your brain
Before the holy instincts of that love
Which, like a second revelation, God
Has founded on our nature! O false pride,
Dark sensual demon, that would rather writhe

An age of agony than ope thy lips—
Curse to thyself, and curse to thy possessor—
O, hadst thou slept one moment, what a flood
Of golden sunshine happy love had poured
Upon the desert darkness of two hearts !
Old man, old man, it is a fearful thing
To know what narrow mists, what threads of will,
Divide a life of full, contented bliss
From years of starved and utter misery—
How near our guideless feet may be to one,
Yet choose the other ! Had a bare distrust
Of your presuming wisdom crossed your mind—
Had Odo come to you with candid heart,
And interchanged frank questions and replies—
She who is mouldering here might still have bloomed
To fragrant ripeness, and we fools, who stand
Watering the relies of our own misdeeds,
Might not be mourners. Woe to us, blind men,
We knit the meshes that ensnare ourselves !
Now hear your story closed by other lips.
Who was the masked assassin of your child?—
Count Odo, mad with the romantic wish
To rescue Giulia : He it was who fought

With stubborn Ugo, burning with a flame
As high as that which lighted chivalry.
Why came Duke Odo to the festival?—
To prove your daughter worthy of his son;
And found her so, beyond his topmost hope,
And would have crowned her with a diadem,
Holding the trinket honored!

PODESTA.

Gracious heaven!

And who are you!

DUKE ODO.

Count Odo. Do not stir:

From this grave hence, our paths lie far apart. [*Exit.*

THE IVORY CARVER.

PROLOGUE.

THREE spirits, more than angels, met
By an Arabian well-side, set
Far in the wilderness, a place
Hallowed by legendary grace.
Here the hair-girded Baptist, John,
Had thrown his wearied being down,
And dreamed the grand prophetic lore
Of what the future held in store ;
And here our patient Christ had knelt,
After the baffled devil felt
The terrors of his stern reproof,
And gazing through the rifted roof

Of palm, had child-like sobbed and prayed
His soul to calmness; here allayed
The mortal thirst which raged within,
Then turned, and all our world of sin
Uplifted on his shoulders vast,
And forth to toil, shame, death, he passed.

A holy place the spirits chose
For blest communion; but the woes
Which follow sin had left a trace
Of gloom on each angelic face :—
Man's sin, the only grief which mars
The joy of heaven, and sadly jars
With its eternal harmony.
One, chief among the spirits three,
Grander than either, more sedate,
Wore yet a look of hope elate
With higher knowledge, larger trust
In the long future; and the rust
Of week-day toil with earthly things
Stained and yet glorified his wings.

“Oh woe!” exclaimed the spirits twain,
“Time comes, time goes, and still the train
Of human sin keeps pace with it.
The seasons change, the shadows flit
Across the world, tides ebb and flow,
But human guilt and human woe
Are ever stirring in the blood,
Are ever fixed at their full flood.
Alas! alas! alas! even we,
Poised in our calm eternity,
Can only see new changes bring
New forms of sin. The offering
To death and hell is overstored,
Heaven’s poor; and yet the patient Lord
Bears with mankind for mankind’s sake.
Shall never vengeful thunders wake
Among earth’s crashing hills, and bare
The horrid lightning in his lair?
Shall never the tornado sweep,
The earthquake yawn, the rebel deep
Scour the rich valleys, till the world—
Back into early chaos hurled,

•

With all her pomps and grandeurs rent—
Though barren, may be innocent?"
"Never! The sign is set on high,
'Twixt sunny earth and weeping sky,
One tittle of the spoken Word
All hell can change not," said the third.
"Patience, dear brothers: ye who ask
Quick, sweeping changes, set a task
Beyond earth's power. She slowly draws,
By due procession of her laws,
Good out of evil. In the ground,
Dark and ill-featured, seeds abound,
Trees grow and blossom, and the flower
Buds into fruit; yet, hour by hour,
No change we mark, until the fruit
Drops down full-ripened. Let us suit
Our hopes to man. The child of clay
Through his own nature wins his way;
Moving by slow and homely means
Towards the blind future, he but gleans
Behind your wide intelligence,
Leaping the stumbling bars of sense.

Full-armed with bounden wealth of thought
Ye stand, and wonder at man's naught;
Scorn his poor ways and sluggish rate,
Rather than gratulate the state,
Uncramped by narrow time and space,
In which ye move. Ye face to face
See all things as they are, he sees
By dim reflection; for the leas
Of earth have settled in his soul,
And made a turbid current roll
Between his mind and essence. Yet
Even earthly natures may beget
Grand ends, and common things be wrought
To holiest uses. I in thought
Have seen the capability
Which lies within yon ivory:—
This rough, black husk, charred by long age,
Unmarked by man since, in his rage,
A warring mammoth shed it: Lo!
Whiter than heaven-sifted snow,
Enclosed within its ugly mask
Lies a world's wonder; and the task

Of slow development shall be
Man's labor and man's glory. See !"
His foot-tip touched it ; the rude bone
Glowed through translucent, widely shone
A morning lustre on the palm
Which arched above it. All the calm
Of the blue air was stirred again
With ecstasy, as the low strain
Of heavenly language rose once more.
"Genius of man, immortal power,
Of birth celestial, 'tis thy hour !
The doors of heaven wide open swing
One moment : Hasten, ere thy wing
Be locked within the lucid wall,
And darkness for dull ages fall
On earth and man, our common care !"
While yet his accents filled the air
Which rippled on the heavenly shore,
A fourth intelligence, who bore
The semblance of a flickering flame,
Steep downward from the zenith came,
Dazzling the path behind him. Still,
Waiting the greater angel's will,

He rested quivering. "Spirit, bear
This ivory to the soul that dare
Work out, through joy, and care, and pain,
The thought which lies within the grain,
Hid like a dim and clouded sun.—
Speed thee!" He spoke, and it was done.

THE IVORY CARVER.

SILENTLY sat the artist alone,
Carving a Christ from the ivory bone.
Little by little, with toil and pain,
He won his way through the sightless grain,
That held and yet hid the thing he sought,
Till the work stood up, a growing thought.
And all around him, unseen yet felt,
A mystic presence forever dwelt,
A formless spirit of subtle flame,
The light of whose being went and came
As the artist paused from work, or bent
His whole heart to it with firm intent.
Serenely the spirit towered on high,
Fixing the blaze of his majesty
Now north, now south, now east, now west :
Wherever the moody shadows pressed
Their cloudy blackness, and slyly sought
To creep o'er the work the artist wrought,

A steady wrath in the spirit's gaze
Withered the skirts of the treacherous haze,
And gloomily backward, fold on fold,
The surging billows of darkness rolled.

“ Husband, why sit you ever alone,
Carving your Christ from the ivory bone ?
O carve, I pray you, some fairy ships,
Or rings for the weaning infant's lips,
Or toys for yon princely boy who stands
Knee-deep in the bloom of his father's lands,
And waits for his idle thoughts to come ;
Or carve the sword-hilt, or merry drum,
Or the flaring edge of a curious can,
Fit for the lips of a bearded man :
With vines and grapes in a cunning wreath,
Where the peering satyrs wink beneath,
And catch around quaintly knotted stems
At flying nymphs by their garment hems.
And carve you another inner rim ;
Let girls hang over the goblet's brim
And dangle in wine their white foot-tips ;
While crouched on their palms, with pouting lips,

Long-bearded Pan and his panting troop
In the golden waves their faces stoop.
O carve you something of solid worth—
Leave heaven to heaven, come, earth to earth.
Carve that thy hearth-stone may glimmer bright,
And thy children laugh in dancing light.”

Steadily answered the carver’s lips,
As he brushed from his brow the ivory chips ;—
While the presence grew with the rising sound,
Spurning in grandeur the hollow ground,
As if the breath on the carver’s tongue
Were fumes from some precious censer swung,
That lifted the spirit’s winged soul
To the heights where crystal planets roll
Their choral anthems, and heaven’s wide arch
Is thrilled with the music of their march ;
And the faithless shades fled backward, dim
From the wondrous light that lived in him.—
Thus spake the carver—his words were few,
Simple and meek, but he felt them true,—
“I labor by day, I labor by night,
The Master ordered, the work is right :

Pray that He strengthen my feeble good;
For much must be conquered, much withstood."
The artist labored, the labor sped,
But a corpse lay in his bridal bed.

Wearily worked the artist alone,
As his tears ran down the ivory-bone;
And the presence lost its wonted glow,
For its trembling heart was beating low,
And the stealthy shadows came crawling in
With the silent tread of a flattered sin;
Till the spirit fled to the Christ's own face,
Like a hunted man to a place of grace;
On the crown, the death-wrung eye, the tear,
On the placid triumph, faint yet clear,
That trembled around the mouth, and last
On the fatal wound, its brightness passed,
Shrinking low down in the horrid scar,
And flickering there like a waning star.
Slowly he labored with drooping head,
For the artist's heart from his work had fled.
He moaned, he muttered his lost one's name,
He looked on the Christ with a look of shame;

He called, he listened, no voice replied;
He prayed her to come again and chide
The hateful work which his hand began;
He promised ships, rings, toys, drinking-can.
With level stare, through the thickening shade,
Hither and thither his eye-balls strayed;
But ne'er turned upward where, just above,
A single star with a look of love—
Divine, supernal, transcending sense—
Shone on him a splendor so intense
That it half replaced the spirit's light,
And thwarted the leaguering bands of night.
Albeit he did not see the star,
Sense is not a perfect pass or bar
For the mystic steps of love; his heart
Felt a dumb stir through its chilliest part,
Felt a warm glow through its currents run,
And knew, as the blind man knows the sun,
That the night was past and day was come.
Bravely he bent o'er the ivory bone;
But dull and dusk as a time-stained stone,
From some mouldering sculptured aisle redeemed,
The face of the slighted figure seemed;

Till with heart and soul the artist cast
His mind on the visionary past,
When the face put on a purer hue,
While again the wondrous presence grew ;
And the star's and the spirit's leagued light
Baffled the cunning of plotting night.

“Father, why sit you ever alone,
Carving this Christ from the ivory bone?
Unlovely the figure, and passing grim
With cramping tortures in every limb.
A ghastly sight is the open wound,
The wicked nails, and the sharp thorns bound
O'er his heavy brow's crowned agony :—
Fearful is Christ on the cursed tree!”
“And see you nothing,” the artist said,
“But pain and death in this sacred head?—
No triumph in the firm lip, see you?
No gracious promise which struggles through
The half-closed lids; or no patient vow
Sealed on the breadth of this mighty brow?
Is my purpose idle, my labor vain?”
They answered, “We see but death and pain.”

A little word had frozen his blood;
All silent the woful artist stood,
Turning the figure, now here now there,
With the stolid wonder of despair.
Blankly his eye-balls he swept around,
Like one who wakes from a dream profound,
And doubts the actual world he sees,
Yet knows his visions but phantasies.
“Nothing?” the artist murmured again.
“Nothing,” they answered, “but death and pain.
O father, come to the sunny heath,
Where the violets nod in their own sweet breath,
Where the roses, prodigal as fair,
Squander their wealth on the thankless air,
And all the glory of heaven and earth
Meets in the hour of the lily’s birth;
Where the wheeling sky-larks upward throng,
Chasing to heaven their morning song,
Till its music fades from the listening ear,
And only God’s placid angels hear,
As they hush their matin hymn, and all
Serenely bend o’er the crystal wall.

Hasten, dear father; there's nothing there
So dread as yon figure's dying stare;
For sun and dew have a cunning way
Of making the dullest thing look gay:
There's a wonder there in the coarsest stone,
Which you cannot solve, yet still must own.
Or if it suit not your present mood,
Come with us then to the darksome wood;
Where cataracts talk to hoary trees
Of the world in by-gone centuries,
Ere the dew on Eden's hills had dried,
Or its valleys lost their flowery pride;
When earth beneath them and heaven above,
Were lulled in the nursing arms of love,
And all God's creatures together grew—
A peace in the very air they drew—
Until sin burst nature's golden zone,
And nature dwindled, and sin has grown.
Come, father, there's more of joy and good
In our merry heath and solemn wood,
Than the cold, dead hands of art can reach,
Or its man-made canons darkly teach."

“Children, dear children, it may not be :
This work the Master hath set for me.
All are not framed of the self-same clay ;
And some must labor, or none could play.”
The bright flowers blossomed, the sky-larks sang,
Deep in the forest the cataracts’ clang
Went up, unheard, in the silent sun ;
The childish ears, which their charms had won,
And the tongues they woke, were there no more—
They lay with the clay that breathed of yore.

Up sprang the artist, and glared around,
Dashing the Christ to the shuddering ground,
With a cry whose piercing agony
Made hell re-echo with welcome glee,
And all the trembling angels pale
At the terrors of that human wail.
“Was it for this, I was singled out
From the cringing, slavish, coward rout
That blacken foul earth ? Was it for this,
I bore the low sneer, the open hiss,
The cross, the passion, the cheerless toil—
Which nothing fosters, and all things foil—

Only that Thou shouldst be glorified
In the Saviour who sitteth by Thy side?
And is this Thy servant's rich reward?
Are these the blessings which Thou hast stored
For the faithful few?—From sons of men
Choose me for Thy chiefest rebel then!
Thrice cursed be the murderous, cheating thought
That led me blindly! The hand that wrought
This ivory fraud, thrice cursed be;
For it slew the hearts that lived for me!
Thrice cursed be the sight of heaven and earth!
Thrice cursed be the womb that gave me birth!
Thrice cursed be the blood on Calvary poured!
Cursed, cursed be Thy hollow name"— The word,
That might have uttered unpardoned sin,
Died on his shuddering lips; and within,
Like a dead weight, on his palsied tongue
The impious thought of his fury hung.
Around, above, with one rapid stoop,
The waiting shadows of evil swoop;
And in and out, through the vast turmoil
Of cloudy currents, that twist and coil

In endless motion, unnumbered forms—
Countless as sands in the desert storms—
Were drifted in masses indistinct;
No limb to a neighboring shape seemed linked.
Now a woful head came staring through,
Then withered hands, where the head withdrew;
Now a brow with wrathful furrows knit,
Then the trailing hair of a girl would flit,
Like a meteor, from the dusky throng
That whirled with the cloudy tide along.
One, more audacious than all the rest,
Who wore his crimes, like a haughty crest
Nodding its plumes o'er a conqueror proud,
Stepped boldly forth from the writhing cloud,
Stepped boldly forth on the solid land,
And clutched the Christ with his sinful hand.
Instant the shadows were rent in twain,
Dashed here and there o'er the frightened plain,
And the star burst blazing from above;
Stern vengeance mixed with its holy love,
As full on the brow of the child of hell,
With the crash of a flaming battle-shell,

The beams of the angry planet fell.
Right boldly the startled demon gazed,
And backward, with dauntless front upraised—
Upon whose terrific waste still gloomed
Hate unsubdued and wrath unconsumed—
He faced the star-beams, and slowly strode
Into the depths of his drear abode.

Motionless sat the artist alone,
Fixing his eyes on the ivory-bone,
Yet seeing nothing. The vengeful star,
As the routed shadows fled afar,
Softened its lustre, and gently glanced
On his torpid breast. As one entranced
Stirs with dumb life, in the solid gloom
Of some unhealthy, damp-dripping tomb;
Feels his coffin-lid with groping hands,
Or clutches the grave-clothes' tightened bands,
And then with a murmur turns him o'er,
Drowsily dozing to death once more :
So seemed the artist. The star-beams brought
A dim sensation, a vague half thought,

That glimmered awhile around his brain,
Then faded, and all was dark again.
But still the warm, loving splendor shone;
And close to the side of the greater one
Two stars, in their new-born freshness, came
Down from the throne of mercy, a-flame
With all its brightness. A silvery trail
Died out behind them in sparkles pale,
As they wheeled within the lustrous sphere
Of the elder star, and shot their clear
Commingled rays o'er the abject clay,
That prone, unmoving and silent lay,
With a dull, cold load of stupid pain
Pressed on his heart and his senseless brain.
Like the springtide sun, that sets a-glow
The tufted meadows with melting snow,
And turns by degrees the icy hills
To balmy vapors and fruitful rills:
So shone the stars on the torpid man;
Until, as the first hard tear-drop ran,
A thought through his gloomy bosom stole.
At once, with a shock of pain, the whole

Broad human nature arose amazed,
With all its guilt on its brow upraised.
Ah me ! 'twas a mournful sight, to see
The three stars shining, so peacefully,
On the raging breast of him who poured
His puny wrath at our gracious Lord.
Awhile, with stubborn and willful might,
The artist strove to drive from his sight
The kindly look of the starry trine ;
Yet turn as he might, some power divine
Would soften his will—he knew not why—
And draw to the light his troubled eye.
Long, long he looked ; till his heavy grief
Of heart gushed forth, and a full relief
Of balmy tear-drops fell, round on round,
Like the blood which marks yet heals a wound.
He staggered, he bowed his stubborn knee,
He fixed his eyes on the shining three ;
And the tears so magnified his gaze,
That the face of heaven seemed all ablaze
With light and mercy. He knew the stars
That looked through his earthly dungeon-bars.—

“I see,” he shouted, “ye live, ye live :
Death is a phantom ! O God, forgive !”

Steadily worked the artist alone,
Carving the Christ from the ivory bone.
Again the bright presence shone around
With a light more dazzling, more profound.
Through day, through night, through fair, through foul,
The artist wrought with a single soul ;
And when hand would tire, or eye grow dim,
He looked at the stars that looked at him,
Until power and vision both were given,
And he carved the Christ by light from heaven.
Under each cruel thorn-point he hid
A world of grief, and each drooping lid
Was closed round its mortal tears of pain ;
But the nostrils curved in proud disdain
Of death and his feeble tyranny ;
And the mouth was calm with victory.
High over all, the majestic brow
Looked down on the storm which raged below,
Big with the power and the god-like will
That said to the sinking heart—“Be still !”

And it was still. For who once had looked
On that mighty brow, saw not the crooked
And veined fingers that clutched the nails,
Nor the fitful spasm that comes and fails
In the dropping legs, nor the wide wound ;
Oh no ! the thorn-wreath seemed twisted round
A victor's head, like a diadem,
And each thorn-point bore a royal gem.

Silently sat the artist alone ;
For the Christ was carved from the ivory bone.
The presence bowed with a holy awe,
And paled in the light of the thing it saw :
But the three stars sang a single word,
Faint and subdued, like a widowed bird
That sings to her own sad heart alone,
And knows that no creature hears her moan.
The artist echoed their timid psalm,
Bowing to earth, with palm clasped in palm ;
And, "Pardon, pardon, pardon," he prayed,
As the Christ upon his heart he laid.
"Pardon, O pardon !" the three stars sang :
"Pardon, O pardon !" All heaven rang

With dulcet sounds, as the angel throng
Joined in the depths of the choral song,
With harp, and viol, and timbrel sweet.
“ Pardon, O pardon !” the saints repeat,
With shrouded faces and solemn close,
As hearts remembering their human woes.
And martyrs, who bore their fiery scars
Like trophies gathered in long-past wars,
Cried, “ Pardon, pardon !” And heaven’s wide hills,
And fruitful valleys, and golden rills,
And long, long levels of sunny sky
Were vibrant with living sympathy ;
And folded and gathered into one
The waves of the multitudinous tone,
Until, like a wingéd thing that glows
With the first joy of its wings, arose
In pride of triumph the mighty sound,
And circled the mercy-seat around ;
Till the glory grew, the sign was given,
And another joy was born in heaven.

EPILOGUE.

THREE priests from Saint Peter's church have come,
To carry an ivory Saviour home.
Long years of unceasing strategies—
New bribes, new threats, and new treacheries—
It cost our holy father ; until
The prior who held it at his will—
“Cursed be his name !” say the brotherhood
Of the house wherein the treasure stood—
Lost all their wealth on a single cast,
And the Pope secured the prize at last.
How it was managed, heaven only knows ;
But by one thing's fall another grows :
And though the prior was cursed, mayhap,
In a year or two a cardinal's cap
Covered more sins than that little slip,
And bore more curses, from every lip,
With as proud a grace to its lord's behoof
As if the cloth were of Milan proof.

Howbeit, I give the slander o'er.
The three priests stand by the convent door,
And the monks, with groans of wrath, essay
To bring the Christ to the light of day.
Three times they had nearly dropped their load:—
All chance, perhaps; but the shoulders broad
Of stout Father John came just in need—
Though his oaths were a little late indeed.
“Is this a matter,” said burly John—
His breath and his temper almost gone—
“To bruise one’s shoulder about? ’Ods blood!
Bring the true image; or, by the rood!
You shall feel the vengeance of the Pope!”
“Why, brothers, you did not think, I hope,”
Said Father Francis—his open eyes
Bewildered with sorrowful surprise—
“To cheat an old connoisseur like me,
With such a bold dash of villainy.
Full fifty better Christs I have seen
Rotting away in the Madaline.
Here’s cause for penance! here’s much to tell!—
Is this your ivory miracle?”

“Hush!” whispered young Anselm’s saintly lips.
“But see the modeling about the hips,”
Broke in sour Francis. “And only see,”
Blustered John boldly, “the holy tree!—
Of English oak! while the chips we own
Are made from cedar of Lebanon.
Either the Church or the artist lies:—
Who doubts it?” Within his reddening eyes
There burnt a general *Auto-de-fe*,
For whomever might his words gainsay.
Anselm waved slowly his small, white hand,
And speech was hushed, as the little band
Of priests and friars drew softly round,
Like men who tread upon holy ground;
For Anselm was half a saint at Rome:
The general country for leagues would come
To hear his preaching. His sermon o’er,
The alms-box groaned with its golden store;
And alone each thoughtful soul would go,
With his happy features all aglow;
As if bounteous heaven’s transfiguring grace
Were sown broad cast o’er each shining face,

And each were revolving in his head
The words which a parting angel said :
So that young Anselm came nigh to be
A saint ere he put off mortality.
Why he was not a bishop, at least,
Or something more than a common priest,
Is a shrewd question we'll not press home—
They don't make bishops of saints at Rome.
Sometimes a bishop becomes a saint ;
But that is after the fleshy taint
Has well worn off in the grave's decay :
And anything can be made from clay ;
Saints, poets, heroes—the thing's all one—
A scratching of pens, and the work is done.

Slowly round Anselm the listeners drew,
Fixing their eyes on his eyes of blue.
He mused, but spoke not. His spirit now
Was lost in the wonder of the brow ;
Or chained to the grand victorious scorn
About the nostril ; or downward borne
In the weight of agony and grief
That loaded the tear-drops ; or relief,

Perchance, he sought in the steady smile
Round the parted lips : But all the while
No word he spoke, though his constant eye
Blazed with the splendor of prophecy ;
As full on the ivory Christ he bent
A look that o'ergathered all it sent—
A fruitful commerce of thoughts sublime
That burst earth's limits, and mocked at time.
So long he looked, and such meaning grew
Twixt the ivory and the eyes of blue,
That the priests who saw do stoutly tell
How the figure moved. "A miracle!"
Shouted Father John, with hanging jaw ;—
"'Ods blood ! and the first I ever saw."
"A miracle !" One clamorous cry
Went up through the low, damp evening sky,
From a score of gaping cowls, that hid
More fear than grace beneath every lid ;
And the caverned hills, around the plain,
Swelled with it, then cast it back again—
A hollow echo, a jeering shout,
Which silenced the lips that gave it out.

Then gently turned Anselm towards the priest,
His great soul filled with a solemn feast
Of thoughtful love ; in the blest repose
Which follows the spirit's higher throes,
Aloud to the silent throng he spoke,
Kindling as thought upon thought awoke.

“O ye, who in midnight caverns dwell,
While the ever-during miracle
Of changing seasons goes through its round
A stone-cast beyond your narrow bound ;—
Even though you will not or cannot see
The marvel born in the growing tree,
The opening flower, or the gracious sun
That gives equal alms to every one :
Shall ye be the first to raise a cry
Of “miracle !” if some passer by
Venture within your hideous cell,
Where the gleam of twilight never fell,
With a flaring torch of smoky pine ?—
Shall ye call the light a thing divine,
Because a mere sudden, curious chance
Has worked on your own dull ignorance,

And given you vision, and taught you lore
That lay from the first at your very door?
Must signs and wonders forever be
Guides on the road to eternity?
Unhood yourselves, and look round you, then,
On earth, air, ocean, your fellow men.
Know that the miracle does not lie
In the roar of jarring prodigy;
But lapped in the everlasting law,
Whose faithful issue last spring ye saw,
When chill earth warmed in the vernal ray,
The snow was melted, the ice gave way,
When the grass rose trembling from the clod,
And pointed its narrow leaf to God.
Who, when this ivory was first revealed,
Saw any marvel, plain or concealed,
In the glorious sculpture? Nay, ye turned
Your senseless shoulders, and boldly spurned
The heavenly thing; till your failing sight—
Caught by a trick of the shifting light—
Fancied some movement, or here, or there—
A crooking finger, a waving hair—

When sudden awe on your weakness fell,
And all cried as one—"A miracle!"
O shallow skeptics! O seekers blind!
The marvel is not the one ye find;
It lies not in moving limb or head,
Though the frame had writhed, the thorn-wounds bled,
The sweet mouth spoken, tears dimmed the eyes—
No, not in these the true mystery lies;
But in the grand irradiate whole,
Warm with its fresh and immortal soul,
Sealed with the seal of eternal youth—
God's presence revealed in simple truth!
I tell you, here standing, this shall preach
When Pope, priests, church, and the creed ye teach
Have passed, like the heathen dreams, away,
And flowers take root in your haughty clay.
When a stranger, on the Appian road,
May ask where Saint Peter's ruins stood;
And a simple hind, who tills the soil
O'er Rome's foundations, may pause from toil,
And say he knows not. Even then shall stand
In the musing stranger's distant land,

Sculptured from bases to pediments
With all that studious art invents,
A temple of marble veined with gold,
Built only this precious Christ to hold.
Air-spanning arches and columns broad,
All stooping beneath their splendid load—
Wide-vaulted chambers whose frescoes rare
People the solemn religious air
With heavenly synods—and heavenly notes,
Blown out from the organ's golden throats,
Shall rise, like a general voice, to tell
Man's joy in yon ivory miracle.
And daily within that holy fane
Shall come a sin-stricken pilgrim train,
From every country beneath the sun,
To gaze on this image ; and each one
Shall loosen his burden of despair,
And stride again to the blessed air
With new power to do, new strength to bear.
For here, in this sacred face, is met
All that mortal ever suffered yet :
All human weakness, all shame, all fear,
Hang in the woe of yon trembling tear ;

And all the will, the valor, the power,
That grapple and hold the adverse hour,
Are throned like kings on yon fearless brow;
And the vassal flesh shall cower and bow,
As nature bows unto nature's laws !"—

Here Anselm's speech made a sudden pause.
Lost in the grand passion at his heart,
With flashing eyes, and lips wide apart—
As one whose full subject overbore,
In torrents, the power to utter more—
He stood all trembling. Like heavy clouds
Moved by one wind, the friars in crowds
Gloomily under their portal swam,
In half-voice chaunting a vesper psalm;
And the priests were standing there alone
With night, the Christ, and four stars that shone—
Brighter and brighter as daylight fled—
Strangely together, just overhead.

THE SONG OF THE EARTH.

PRELUDE.

CHORUS OF PLANETS.

HARK to our voices, O mother of Nations !
Why art thou dim when thy sisters are radiant?
Why veil'st thy face in a mantle of vapor,
Gliding obscure through the depths of the night?
Wake from thy lethargy. Hear'st thou our music,
Harmonious, that reaches the confines of space?
Join in our chorus, join in our jubilee,
Make the day pine with thy far-piercing melody—
Pine that his kingdom of blue sky and sunshine
Never re-echoes such marvelous tones.
No, thou art silent, O mystical sister,

Silent and proud that thou bear'st on thy bosom
The wonderful freight of the God-lighted soul.—
We hear thee, we hear thee, beneath thy thick mantle,
The war of the winds through thy leaf-laden forests,
And round aisles of thy pillared and hill-piercing
Caverns sonorous; hear the dread avalanche
Torn from its quivering mountainous summit,
Ribbéd with massy rocks, crested with pine trees,
Thundering enormous upon thy fair valleys;
Hear the dull roar of thy mist-spouting cataracts;
Hear the faint splash of thy salt seething billows,
Lifting their heads multitudinous, or shoreward
Climbing the cliffs that o'erhang them with trembling,
And tossing their spray in exultant defiance
Over the weed-bearded guardians of ocean.
Sister, we listen; thy strains are enlinking,
Melodiously blending to ravishing harmony;
Clouds are departing, we see thee, we yearn to thee,
Noblest of planets, creation's full glory!
Bending we hearken, thou mother of nations,
Hark to the sky-rending voice of humanity.

SONG OF THE EARTH.

O vex me not, ye ever-burning planets;
Nor sister call me, ye who me afflict.
I am unlike ye; ye may reveling sing,
Careless and joyful, roaming sun-lit ether,
Urged with but one emotion, chaunting still
Through lapsing time the purpose of your birth,
Each with a several passion; but to me
Are mixed emotions, vast extremes of feeling—
Now verdant in the fruitful smile of heaven,
Now waste and blackened in the scowl of hell.
Ye know me not, nor can ye sympathize
With one like me, for wisdom is not yours.
Ye sing for joy; but wisdom slowly comes
From the close whispers of o'erburdened pain.
I am alone in all the universe!
To me is pain; I can distinguish sin;
But ye with constant though unweeting glance
Rain good or ill, and smile alike at both,

Nor understand the mystery of your natures.
To me is wisdom—wisdom bought with woe,
Ages on ages passed, when first I strayed,
With haughty scorn and self-reliant pride,
From purity and God. For once like you
God spoke me face to face, me soulless led
From joy to joy; yet He was mystical—
Too obvious for thought—I knew Him not:
But now, through sin, I understand like Him
The heart of things, the steep descents of guilt,
And the high pinnacles of heaven-lit virtue.
Bend down, ye stars, bend from your silver thrones,
Ye joyful wanderers of ether bright;
For I, soul-bearer of the universe,
Would teach your ignorance with the lips of song!

O MERCURY, hot planet, burying deep
Thy forehead in the sunlight, list to me!
I groan beneath thy influence. Thou dost urge
The myriad hands of labor, and with toil
Dost mar my features; day by day dost work
Thy steady changes on my ancient face,
Till all the host of heaven blank wonder look,

Nor know the fresh, primeval moulded form
That rose from chaos, like the Aphrodite,
Smiling through dew upon the first morn's sun.
The leaf-crowned mountain's brows thou hurlest down
Into the dusty valley, and dost still
The free wild singing of the cleaving streams
To murmurs dying lazily within
The knotted roots of pool-engendered lilies,
That sluggish nod above the slimy dams.
All day the axe I hear rending through trunks,
Moss-grown and reverend, of clustered oaks;
All day the circling scythe sweeps off
The ruddy-bloom of vain-aspiring fields,
Clipping to stubbles grim the vernal flowers.
Thou portionest my meadows, and dost make
Each fruitful slope a spot for sweaty toil.
Thou tearest up my bosom, far within
My golden veins the griméd miner's pick
Startles the babbling echoes. Ancient rocks,
My hardy bones, are rent with nitrous fire,
To rear the marts, to bridge the leaping streams,
Or to usurp the ocean's olden right,
That selfish trade may dry-shod walk to power.

The very ocean, grim, implacable,
Thou loadest with the white-winged fleets of commerce,
Crossing, like wheeling birds, each other's tracks;
Until the burdened giant, restless grown,
Bounds from his sleep, and in the stooping clouds
Nods his white head, while splintered navies melt
To scattered fragments in his sullen froth.
Malignant star, I feel thy wicked power;
My children's busy thoughts are full of thee:
Thou'st chilled the loving spirit in their hearts,
And on their lips hast placed the selfish finger—
They dare not know each other. All that is,
All that God blessed my teeming bosom with,
Is priced and bartered; ay, the very worth
Of man himself is weighed with senseless gold—
Therefore I hate thee, bright-browed wanderer!

Daughter of the sober twilight,
Lustrous planet, ever hanging
In the mottled mists that welcome
Coming morning, or at evening
Peeping through the ruddy banners
Of the clouds that wave a parting,

From their high aerial summits,
To the blazing god of day—
'Tis for thee I raise my pæan,
Steady-beaming VENUS, kindler,
In the stubborn hearts of mortals,
Of the sole surviving passion
That enlinks a lost existence
With the dull and ruthless present.
Far adown the brightening future,
Prophetess, I see thee glancing—
See thee still amid the twilight
Of the ages rolling onward,
Promising to heart-sick mortals
Triumph of thy gracious kingdom;
When the hand of power shall weaken,
And the wronger right the wrongéd,
And the pure, primeval Eden
Shall again o'erspread with blossoms
Sunny hill and shady valley.
'Tis to thee my piny mountains
Wave aloft their rustling branches,
'Tis to thee my opening flowrets
Send on high their luscious odors,

'Tis to thee my leaping fountains
Prattle through their misty breathings,
And the bass of solemn ocean
Chimes accordant in the chorus.
Every fireside is thy altar
Streaming up its holy incense ;
Every mated pair of mortals,
Happily linked, are priest and priestess,
Pouring to thee full libations
From their over-brimming spirits.
Clash the loud resounding cymbals,
Light the rosy torch of Hymen,
Bands of white-robed youths and maidens
Whirl aloft the votive myrtle !
Raise the choral hymn to VENUS—
Young-eyed VENUS, ever youthful,
Ever on true hearts bestowing
Pleasures new that never pall !
Brightest link 'tween man and heaven,
Soul of virtue, life of goodness,
Cheering light in pain and sorrow,
Pole-star to the struggling voyager
Wrecked on life's relentless billows,

Fair reward of trampled sainthood,
Beaming from the throne Eternal
Lonely hope to sinful mankind—
Still among the mists of morning,
Still among the clouds of evening,
While the years drive ever onward,
Hang thy crescent lamp of promise,
VENUS, blazing star of Love!

O MARS, wide heaven is shuddering at the stride,
Of thy mailed foot, most terrible of planets!
I see thee struggling with thy brazen front
To look a glory from amid the crust
Of guilty blood that dims thy haughty face;
The curse of crime is on thee. Look, behold!

See where thy frenzied votaries march,
Hark to the brazen blare of the bugle,
Hark to the rattling clatter of the drums,
The measured tread of the steel-clad footmen.
Hark to the laboring horses' breath,
Painfully tugging the harnessed cannon;
The shrill, sharp clink of the warriors' swords,

As their chargers bound when the trumpets sound
Their alarums through the echoing mountains.
See the flashing of pennons and scarfs,
Shaming the gorgeous blazon of evening,
Rising and falling 'mid snowy plumes
That dance like foam on the crested billows.
Bright is the glitter of burnished steel,
Stirring the clamor of martial music,
The clank of arms has a witchery
That wakes the blood in a youthful bosom.
And who could tell from this pleasant show,
That flaunts in the sun like a May-day festal,
For what horrid rites are the silken flags,
For what horrid use are the gleaming sabres,
What change shall mar, when the battles join,
This marshaled pageant of shallow glory;
For then the gilded flags shall be rent,
The sabres rust with the blood of foemen,
And the courteous knight shall howl like a wolf,
When he scents the gory steam of battle.

The orphan's curse is on thee, and the tears
Of widowed matrons plead a fearful cause ;

Each thing my bosom bears, which thou has touched,
Is loud against thee. Flowers and trampled grass,
And the long line of waste and barren fields,
Erewhile o'erflowing with a sea of sweets,
Look up all helpless to the pitying heavens,
Showing thy bloody footprints in their wounds,
And shrieking through their gaunt and leafless trees,
That stand with imprecating arms outspread,
They fiercely curse thee with their desolation.
Each cheerless hearth-stone in the home of man,
Where ruin grins, and rubs his bony palms,
Demands its lost possessor. Thou hast hurled
Man's placid reason from its rightful throne,
And in its place reared savage force, to clip
Debate and doubt with murder. Therefore, MARS,
I sicken in thy angry glance, and loath
The dull red glitter of thy bloody spear.

I know thy look, majestic JUPITER ;
I see thee moving through the stars of heaven
Girt with thy train of ministering satellites.
Proud planet, I confess thy influence :
My heart grows big with gazing in thy face ;

Unwonted power pervades my eager frame;
My bulk aspiring towers above itself,
And restless pants to rush on acts sublime,
At which the wondering stars might stand agaze,
And the whole universe from end to end,
Conscious of me, should tremble to its core.
Spirit heroical, imperious passion,
That sharply sets the pliant face of youth,
That blinds the shrinking eyes of pallid fear,
And plants the lion's heart in modest breasts—
I know that thou hast led, with regal port,
The potent spirits of humanity
Before the van of niggard time, and borne,
With strides gigantic, man's advancing race
From power to power; till, like a host of gods,
They mock my elements, and drag the secrets
Of my mysterious forces up to light,
Giving them bounds determinate and strait,
And of their natures, multiform and huge,
Talking to children in familiar way.
The hero's sword, the poet's golden string,
The tome-illuming taper of the sage
Flash by thy influence; from thee alone,

Ambitious planet, comes the marvelous power
That in a cherub's glowing form can veil
A heart as cold as Iceland, and exalt
To deity the demon selfishness.

O planet, mingle with thy chilling rays,
That stream inspiring to the hero's soul,
One beam of love for vast humanity,
And thou art godlike. Must it ever be,
That brightest flowers of action and idea
Spring from the same dark soil of selfish lust?
Must man receive the calculated gifts
Of shrewd ambition's self-exalting hand,
And blindly glorify an act at which
The host of heaven grow red with thoughtful shame?
Shall knowledge hasten with her sunny face,
And weeping virtue lag upon the path?
Shall man exultant boast advance of power,
Nor see arise, at every onward stride,
New forms of sin to shadow every truth?
Roll on, roll on, in self-supported pride,
Prodigious influence of the hero's soul;
I feel thy strength, and tremble in thy glare!

O many-ringéd SATURN, turn away
The chilling terrors of thy baleful glance !
Thy gloomy look is piercing to my heart—
I wither in thy power ! My springs dry up,
And shrink in horror to their rocky beds ;
The brooks that whispered to the lily-bells
All day the glory of their mountain homes,
And kissed the dimples of the wanton rose,
At the deed blushing to their pebbly strands,
Cease their sweet merriment, and glide afraid
Beneath the shelter of the twisted sedge.
The opening bud shrinks back upon its shell,
As if the north had puffed his frozen breath
Full in its face. The billowing grain and grass
Rippling with windy furrows stand becalmed ;
Nor through their roots, nor in their tiny veins
Bestirs the fruitful sap. The very trees,
Broad, hardy sons of crags and sterile plains,
That roared defiance to the winter's shout,
And battled sternly through his cutting sleet,
Droop in their myriad leaves : while nightly birds,
That piped their shrilling treble to the moon,
Hang silent from the boughs, and peer around

Awed by mysterious sympathy. From thee,
From thee, dull planet comes this lethargy
That numbs in 'mid career meek nature's power,
And stills the prattle of her plumed train.
O icy SATURN, proud in ignorance,
Father of sloth, dark deadening influence,
That dims the eye to all that's beautiful,
And twists the haughty lip with killing scorn
For love and holiness—from thee alone
Springs the cold, crushing power that presses down
The infinite in man.—From thee, dull star,
The cautious fear that checks the glowing heart,
With sympathetic love, world-wide, o'erfreighted,
And sends it panting back upon itself,
To murmur in its narrow hermitage.
The boldest hero staggers in thy frown,
And drops his half-formed projects all aghast;
The poet shrinks before thy phantom glare,
Ere the first echo greets his timid song;
The startled sage amid the embers hurls
The gathered wisdom of a fruitful life.
O, who may know from what bright pinnacles
The mounting soul might look on coming time,

Had all the marvelous thoughts of genius—
Blasted to nothingness by thy cold sneer—
Burst through the bud and blossomed into fruit?
Benumbing planet, on our system's skirt,
Whirl from thy sphere, and round some lonely sun,
Within whose light no souls their ordeal pass,
Circle and frown amid thy frozen belts;
For I am sick of thee, and stately man
Shrinks to a pigmy in thy fearful stare !

FINALE.

CHORUS OF STARS.

HEIR of eternity, mother of souls,
Let not thy knowledge betray thee to folly!
Knowledge is proud, self-sufficient and lone,
Trusting, unguided, its steps in the darkness.
Thine is the learning that mankind may win,
Gleaned in the pathway between joy and sorrow;
Ours is the wisdom that hallows the child,
Fresh from the touch of his awful Creator,
Dropped, like a star, on thy shadowy realm,
Falling in splendor, but falling to darken.
Ours is the simple religion of faith,
The wisdom of trust in God who o'errules us—
Thine is the complex misgivings of thought,
Wrested to form by imperious reason.
We are forever pursuing the light—
Thou art forever astray in the darkness.
Knowledge is restless, imperfect and sad—

Faith is serene and completed and joyful.
Chide not the planets that rule o'er thy ways ;
They are God's creatures ; nor proud in thy reason,
Vaunt that thou knowest His counsels and Him—
Boaster, though sitting in midst of the glory,
Thou couldst not fathom the least of His thoughts.
Bow in humility, bow thy proud forehead,
Circle thy form in a mantle of clouds,
Hide from the glittering cohorts of evening,
Wheeling in purity, singing in chorus ;
Howl in the depths of thy lone, barren mountains,
Restlessly moan on the deserts of ocean,
Wail o'er thy fall in the desolate forests,
Lost star of paradise, straying alone !

THE VISION OF THE GOBLET.

EVOE BACCHE! wine hath seized my soul;

The fury of the jolly god is on!

Reach me the mighty ancient bowl:

Fill till the goblet weeps,

Fill till the rushing current sweeps

The dull, cold present to oblivion!

Now swing amain the mystic beaker tall,

And still to Bacchus breathe the potent spell;

Rouse the red-visaged god from slumbers deep

In green Arcadian dell!

Swing till the ruby breakers rise and fall,

Swing till the coursing bubbles leap

Above their crystal wall!

What gleams beneath the purple flood,
Far down upon the nether rim,
Glowing amid the vine's rich blood
As through a sunset's misty film?
'Tis Attica, mild Attica, that sleeps
Embayed by heaven among her vine-grown hills;
Mantled with flowers and glossy grass she lies,
Smiling in all her rills;
Palace and temple-crowned she keeps
Her stately slumber 'neath the evening skies;
While Venus, brooding in a feathery cloud,
As in her nest the silver-breasted dove,
Peeps now and then above her dusky shroud
Upon the land of love.

Hark! the wine-waves, dashing, splashing,
Seem bacchantian cymbals clashing
To the rumbling drum,
And the shivering flutes' shrill singing,
And the jingling tabors' ringing;
While anon, the hurly dying,
Syrinx softly breathes her sighing
From the warbling reed.

Caught in the Satyr's wily snare,
What throngs across the valley come ;
As whirling in the eddy stream
Of music to the hills they speed,
While upturned Attic foreheads gleam

Amid their billowing hair !
Reeling, staggering, on they fly,
Wine in the blood and dizzy eye,
Wine in every sinew burning,
Onward still its minions spurning
Over hill, through lushy meadow,
Through the forest's glooming shadow,
Hither, thither, without caring
Where their guideless feet are bearing.

Tossing aloft, with nods of drunken cheer,
Mark old Silenus on his ass appear ;

Plashed is his hoary beard with purple wine,
Daggled his silver locks, his reeking brows
Crowned with the ivy and the twisted vine.

Mark how the dotard leers,
As through the maids he steers,

And tries to summon love within his filmy eyne!
Thick with the luscious grape
His mumbled words escape,
The barren echoes of his youthful vows.

Lo! full-eyed Bacchus from triumphant war,
Rich with the trophied Orient's boast,
Goads through the crowd his flaming Indian car
Before the Satyr host,
That roaring straggle in their master's rear,
Twirling the ivied thyrsus as they bound,
And dance grotesque, and mingled laugh and jeer,
And cloven foot-falls shake the springing ground.

Around the hairy rout, with streaming hands,
Athena's maidens whirl the dripping urn;
Their floating vestures, loosed from jealous bands,
Half hide, half show what charms beneath them burn.
There mellow Pan upon the Attic ear,
Framed with a dainty sense for melody,
Pours music from his pipe of knotted reeds,
Lifting the ravished soul to that high sphere
Where joy and pain contend for mastery.

Now tittering glee the grinning Satyr breeds,

Now flings the heart in tearful depths of woe,

Now big-eyed fear the shrinking crowd appals,

Now to the blithsome dance the music calls ;

Then with full power and long, triumphant flow

Of swelling notes that shake the rooted soul,

And rise and fall with ocean's measured roll,

He lifts to Bacchus his resounding lay ;

Tabor and drum confess the potent sway,

And join their muffled notes.

With nodding heads and brandished arms,

And flashing eyes, and swelling throats,

That heave with song's advancing tides,

The crowd obeys the cunning master's charms.

A murmured hum athwart the listeners glides,

While still the pipes their pealing notes prolong,

Piercing the heavens with wild exultant shout,

Till maddened by fierce harmony, the throng

From end to end in ecstasy bursts out,

And thus to Bacchus pours its choral song.

Joy, joy with Bacchus and his Satyr train

In triumph throbs our merry Grecian earth !

Joy, joy, the golden time has come again,
A god shall bless the vine's illustrious birth!
Io, io, Bacche!

O breezes, speed across the mellow lands,
And bear his coming to the joyous vine;
Make all the vineyards wave their leafy hands
Upon the hills, to greet this pomp divine!
Io, io, Bacche!

O peaceful triumph, victory without tear,
Or human cry, or drop of conquered blood,
Save dew-beads bright, that on the vine appear,
The choral shouts, the trampled grape's red flood!
Io, io, Bacche!

Shout, Hellas, shout! the lord of joy is come,
Bearing the mortal Lethe in his hands,
To make the wailing lips of sorrow dumb,
To bind sad memory's eyes with rosy bands.
Io, io, Bacche!

Shout, Hellas, shout ! he bears the soul of love,
 Within each glowing drop Promethean fire ;
The coldest maids beneath its power shall move,
 And bashful youths be bold with hot desire.
 Io, io, Bacche !

Long may the ivy deck thy sculptured brows,
 Long may the goat upon thy altars bleed,
Long may thy temples hear our tuneful vows,
 Chiming accordant to the vocal reed.
 Io, io, Bacche !

Long may the hills and nodding forests move,
 Responsive echoing thy festal drum,
Grief-scattering Bacchus, twice-born son of Jove—
 Our hearts are singing, let our lips be dumb.
 Io, io, Bacche !

“I HAVE A COTTAGE.”

I HAVE a cottage where the sunbeams lurk,
Peeping around its gables all day long,
Brimming the butter-cups until they drip
With molten gold, like o'ercharged crucibles.
Here, wondering why the morning-glories close
Their crumpled edges ere the dew is dry,
Great lilies stand, and stretch their languid buds
In the full blaze of noon, until its heat
Has pierced them to their centres. Here the rose
Is larger, redder, sweeter, longer-lived,
Less thorny, than the rose of other lands.

I have a cottage where the south wind comes,
Cool from the spicy pines, or with a breath

Of the mid ocean salt upon its lips,
And a low, lulling, dreamy sound of waves,
To breathe upon me, as I lie along
On my white violets, marveling at the bees
That toil but to be plundered, or the mart
Of striving men, whose bells I sometimes hear
When they will toss their brazen throats at heaven,
And howl to vex me. But the town is far;
And all its noises, ere they trouble me,
Must take a convoy of the scented breeze,
And climb the hills, and cross the bloomy dales,
And catch a whisper in the swaying grain,
And bear unfaithful echoes from the wood,
And mix with birds, and streams, and fluttering leaves,
And an old ballad which the shepherd hums,
Straying in thought behind his browsing flock.

I have a cottage where the wild bee comes
To hug the thyme, and woo its dainties forth;
Where humming-birds, plashed with the rainbow's dies,
Poise on their whirring wings before the door,
And drain my honeysuckles at a draught.
Ah, giddy sensualist, how thy blazing throat

Flashes and throbs, while thou dost pillage me
Of all my virgin flowers! And then, away—
What eye may follow! But yon constant robin;
Spring, summer, winter, still the same clear song
At morn and eve, still the contented hop,
And low sly whistle, when the crumbs are thrown:
Yet he is jealous of my tawny thrush,
And drives him off, ere a faint symphony
Ushers the carol warming in his breast.

I have a cottage where the winter winds
Wreck their rude passions on the neighboring hills,
And crawl down, shattered by the edgéd rocks,
To hide themselves among the stalactites,
That roof my frosty cave, against midsummer;
Or in the bosom of the stream they creep,
Numbing the gurgling current till it lies
Stark, frozen, lifeless, silent as the moon;
Or wrestle with the cataracts; or glide,
Rustling close down, among the crisp dead grass,
To chase the awkward rabbits from their haunts;
Or beat my roof with its own sheltering boughs;—

Yet never daunt me ! For my flaming logs
Pour up the chimney a defiant roar,
While Shakspeare and a flask of southern wine,
Brown with the tan of Spain, or red Bordeaux,
Charm me until the crocus says to me,
In its own way, "Come forth; I've brought the spring!"

I have a cottage where a brook runs by,
Making faint music from the rugged stones
O'er which it slides; and at the height of Prime,
When snows are melting on the misty hills
That front the south, this brook comes stealing up
To wash my door-stone. Oft it bears along,
Sad sight, a funeral of primroses—
Washed from the treacherous bank to which they grew
With too fond faith—all trooping one by one,
With nodding heads in seemly order ranged,
Down its dull current towards the endless sea.
O brook, bear me, with such a holy calm,
To the vast ocean that awaits for me,
And I know one whose mournful melody
Shall make your name immortal as my love.

I have a cottage in the cloven hills ;
Through yonder peaks the flow of sunlight comes,
Dragging its sluggish tide across the path
Of the reluctant stars which silently
Are buried in it : Through yon western gap
Day ebbs away, leaving a margin round,
Of sky and cloud, drowned in its sinking flood,
Till Venus shimmers through the rising blue,
And lights her sisters up. Here lie the moonbeams,
Hour after hour, becalmed in the still trees,
Or on the weltering leaves of the young grass
Rest half asleep, rocked by some errant wind.
Here are more little stars, on winter nights,
Than sages reckon in their heavenly charts ;
For the brain wanders, and the dizzy eye
Aches at their sum, and dells, and winks with them.
The Northern lights come down to greet me here,
Playing fantastic tricks, above my head,
With their long tongues of fire that dart and catch,
From point to point, across the firmament,
As if the face of heaven were passing off
In low combustion ; or the kindling night

Were slowly flaming to a fatal dawn,
Wide-spread and sunless as the day of doom.

I have a cottage cowering in the trees,
And seeming to shrink lower day by day.
Sometimes I fancy that the growing boughs
Have dwarfed my dwelling; but the solemn oaks,
That hang above my roof so lovingly,
They too have shrunk. I know not how it is:
For when my mother led me by the hand
Around our pale, it seemed a weary walk;
And then, as now, the sharp roof nestled there,
Among the trees, and they propped heaven. Alas!
Who leads me now around the bushy pale?
Who shows the birds' nests in the twilight leaves?
Who catches me within her fair round arms,
When autumn shakes the acorns on our roof
To startle me? I know not how it is:
The house has shrunk, perhaps, as our poor hearts,
When they both broke at parting, and mine closed
Upon a memory, shutting out the world
Like a sad anchorite.—Ah! that gusty morn!
But here she lived, here died, and so will I.

I have a cottage—murmur if ye will,
Ye men whose lips are prison-doors to thoughts
Born, with mysterious struggles, in the heart;
And, maidens, let your store of hoarded smiles
Break from their dimples, like the spreading rings
That skim a lake, when some stray blossom falls
Warm in its bosom. Ah, you cannot tell
Why violets choose not a neighboring bank,
Why cowslips blow upon the self-same bed,
Why year by year the swallow seeks one nest,
Why the brown wren rebuilds her hairy home.
O, sightless cavers, you do not know
How deep roots strike, or with what tender care
The soft down lining warms the nest within.
Think as you will, murmur and smile apace—
I have a cottage where my days shall close,
Calm as the setting of a feeble star.

THE RIVER AND THE MAIDEN.

FROM the sunset flows the river,
Melting all its waves in one ;
Not a ripple, not a quiver,
On the flaming water, ever
Poured from the descending sun :

Seeming like a pathway lately
Radiant with an angel's tread ;
And yon vessel, moving stately,
Is the heavenly one sedately
Walking with his wings outspread.

What a quiet! Through the branches,
Silently the orioles skip;
Not again the fish-hawk launches,
Silently his plumes he stanches,
Silently the sedges drip.

Other sights, and loud commotion,
Fill this tranquil stream by day;
With a solemn swaying motion,
Wave-worn ships forsake the ocean,
Bound from countries leagues away :

Odorous with their eastern spices,
Rich with gems of the Brazils,
Persian silks of quaint devices,
Nameless things of wondrous prices,
Luscious wines from Spanish hills;

Furs from the sly ermine riven,
Ingots of Peruvian mould,
Where the deadly tropic levin
Crashes from the blazing heaven,
Piercing earth with veins of gold.

But amid the sacred quiet
Of this gentle evening-time,
Toil and sin have ceased their riot ;
One might judge the awful fiat
Were removed from Adam's crime.

Holiest eve, thy light discloses
Holiest things; for through the shades
Mark I where my love reposes,
Sitting there amid the roses
Like a queen amid her maids.

Through the foliage, green and golden,
Round her head the sunbeams dart,
Haloing her like some saint olden;
And a chapel calm is holden
In the stillness of her heart.

Distant, yet I guess her singing;
Haply some poor lay of mine,
Loud with drum and trumpet ringing,
Or of shameless goblets swinging
In the tumult of the wine.

Wicked ballad ! all unsuited
To the genial season's calm,
Harsh, discordant, sin-polluted ;—
Yet by her sweet voice transmuted
Almost to a vesper psalm.

See, her steps are hither bending,
This, our trysting-place, she seeks :
All her wealth is with her wending,
In the lights and shadows blending
Round the dimples of her cheeks ;

In the eyes that melt at sorrow,
In the wisdom without wiles,
In the faith that will not borrow
From to-day fear of to-morrow,
In a countless store of smiles ;

In the heart that cannot flutter
For a breath of flattery,
In the mouth that cannot utter
Halting lie or envious mutter—
In her simple love for me.

Crowd yon river with your barges—

All the navies of the main—

Till the loaded tide enlarges,

Till it bursts its wonted marges,

Deluging the pleasant plain !

Freight them with the precious plunder

Of the lands beyond the sea—

Pearls that make the diver wonder,

All the virgin silver under

The great hills of Potosi ;

All the real and fabled riches

Of the haughty Persian Khan,

All the gold that so bewitches,

All the gorgeous broidered stitches

Of the girls of Hindoostan ;

All the furs, the wines, the treasures,

Were they at my bidding laid,

Ten times doubled in their measures,

Ten times doubled in their pleasures,

I would rather have the maid !

A BALLAD OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

“The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around.”—COLERIDGE.

O, WHITHER sail you, Sir John Franklin?
Cried a whaler in Baffin's Bay.
To know if between the land and the pole
I may find a broad sea-way.

I charge you back, Sir John Franklin,
As you would live and thrive;
For between the land and the frozen pole
No man may sail alive.

But lightly laughed the stout Sir John,
And spoke unto his men :
Half England is wrong, if he is right ;
Bear off to westward then.

O, whither sail you, brave Englishman ?
Cried the little Esquimaux.
Between your land and the polar star
My goodly vessels go.

Come down, if you would journey there,
The little Indian said ;
And change your cloth for fur clothing,
Your vessel for a sled.

But lightly laughed the stout Sir John,
And the crew laughed with him too :—
A sailor to change from ship to sled,
I ween, were something new !

All through the long, long polar day,
The vessels westward sped ;
And wherever the sail of Sir John was blown,
The ice gave way and fled.

Gave way with many a hollow groan,
And with many a surly roar,
But it murmured and threatened on every side,
And closed where he sailed before.

Ho ! see ye not, my merry men,
The broad and open sea ?
Bethink ye what the whaler said,
Think of the little Indian's sled !
The crew laughed out in glee.

Sir John, Sir John, 'tis bitter cold,
The scud drives on the breeze,
The ice comes looming from the north,
The very sunbeams freeze.

Bright summer goes, dark winter comes—
We cannot rule the year ;
But long ere summer's sun goes down,
On yonder sea we'll steer.

The dripping icebergs dipped and rose,
And floundered down the gale ;

The ships were staid, the yards were manned,
And furled the useless sail.

The summer's gone, the winter's come,
We sail not on yonder sea :
Why sail we not, Sir John Franklin?
A silent man was he.

The summer goes, the winter comes—
We cannot rule the year :
I ween, we cannot rule the ways,
Sir John, wherein we'd steer.

The cruel ice came floating on,
And closed beneath the lee,
Till the thickening waters dashed no more ;
'Twas ice around, behind, before—
My God ! there is no sea !

What think you of the whaler now ?
What of the Esquimaux ?
A sled were better than a ship,
To cruise through ice and snow.

Down sank the baleful crimson sun,
The northern light came out,
And glared upon the ice-bound ships,
And shook its spears about.

The snow came down, storm breeding storm,
And on the decks was laid ;
Till the weary sailor, sick at heart,
Sank down beside his spade.

Sir John, the night is black and long,
The hissing wind is bleak,
The hard, green ice is strong as death :—
I prithee, Captain, speak !

The night is neither bright nor short,
The singing breeze is cold,
The ice is not so strong as hope—
The heart of man is bold !

What hope can scale this icy wall,
High over the main flag-staff ?

Above the ridges the wolf and bear
Look down, with a patient, settled stare,
Look down on us and laugh.

The summer went, the winter came—
We could not rule the year;
But summer will melt the ice again,
And open a path to the sunny main,
Whereon our ships shall steer.

The winter went, the summer went,
The winter came around;
But the hard, green ice was strong as death,
And the voice of hope sank to a breath,
Yet caught at every sound.

Hark! heard you not the noise of guns?—
And there, and there, again?
'Tis some uneasy iceberg's roar,
As he turns in the frozen main.

Hurra! hurra! the Esquimaux
Across the ice-fields steal:

God give them grace for their charity !
Ye pray for the silly seal.

Sir John, where are the English fields,
And where are the English trees,
And where are the little English flowers
That open in the breeze ?

Be still, be still, my brave sailors !
You shall see the fields again,
And smell the scent of the opening flowers,
The grass, and the waving grain.

Oh ! when shall I see my orphan child ?
My Mary waits for me.
Oh ! when shall I see my old mother,
And pray at her trembling knee ?

Be still, be still, my brave sailors !
Think not such thoughts again.
But a tear froze slowly on his cheek ;
He thought of Lady Jane.

Ah! bitter, bitter grows the cold,
 The ice grows more and more;
 More settled stare the wolf and bear,
 More patient than before.

Oh! think you, good Sir John Franklin,
 We'll ever see the land?
 'Twas cruel to send us here to starve,
 Without a helping hand.

'Twas cruel, Sir John, to send us here,
 So far from help or home,
 To starve and freeze on this lonely sea:
 I ween, the Lords of the Admiralty
 Would rather send than come.

Oh! whether we starve to death alone,
 Or sail to our own country,
 We have done what man has never done—
 The truth is founded, the secret won—
 We passed the Northern Sea!

SONGS AND SONNETS.

SONGS AND SONNETS.

LOVE-LORN Lucy

On a bank sat sighing,
Welladay ! ah ! welladay !
My fickle love has flown away,
And left me here a-dying.

False, false pledges—

Why did I receive them ?
Vows are but words, and words but air,
And air can blow both foul and fair :
Oh ! why did I believe them ?

Ah! light-hearted,
Would thy fraud might slay me!
Would thy scorn might end my pain!
Or would that thou might'st come again,
And again betray me!

THERE was a gay maiden lived down by the mill—

Ferry me over the ferry—

Her hair was as bright as the waves of a rill,

When the sun on the brink of his setting stands still,

Her lips were as full as a cherry.

A stranger came galloping over the hill—

Ferry me over the ferry—

He gave her broad silver and gold for his will :

She glanced at the stranger, she glanced o'er the sill ;

The maiden was gentle and merry.

Oh ! what would you give for your virtue again?—

Ferry me over the ferry—

Oh ! silver and gold on your lordship I'd rain,

I'd double your pleasure, I'd double my pain,

This moment forever to bury.

I SIT beneath the sunbeams' glow,
Their golden currents round me flow,
Their mellow kisses warm my brow,
 But all the world is dreary.
The vernal meadow round me blooms,
And flings to me its faint perfumes;
Its breath is like an opening tomb's—
 I'm sick of life, I'm weary!

The mountain brook skips down to me,
Tossing its silver tresses free,
Humming like one in revery;
 But ah! the sound is dreary.

The trilling blue-birds o'er me sail,
There's music in the faint-voiced gale;
All sound to me a mourner's wail—
I'm sick of life, I'm weary.

The night leads forth her starry train,
The glittering moonbeams fall like rain,
There's not a shadow on the plain;
Yet all the scene is dreary.
The sunshine is a mockery,
The solemn moon stares moodily;
Alike is day or night to me—
I'm sick of life, I'm weary.

I know to some the world is fair,
For them there's music in the air,
And shapes of beauty everywhere;
But all to me is dreary.
I know in me the sorrows lie
That blunt my ear and dim my eye;
I cannot weep, I fain would die—
I'm sick of life, I'm weary.

STREET LYRICS.

I.

THE GROCER'S DAUGHTER.

STOP, stop! and look through the dusty pane.—

She's gone!—Nay, hist! again I have caught her :
There is the source of my sighs of pain,
There is my idol, the Grocer's daughter !

“A child! no woman!” A bud, no flower:

But think, when a year or more has brought her
Its ripening roundness, how proud a dower
Of charms will bloom in the Grocer's daughter!

I have a love for the flower that blows,
One for the bud that needs sun and water ;
The first because it is now a rose,
The other will be—like the Grocer's daughter.

She stood in the door, as I passed to-day,
And mine and a thousand glances sought her ;
Like a star from heaven with equal ray,
On all alike shone the Grocer's daughter.

Mark how the sweetest on earth can smile,
As yon patient drudge, yon coarse-browed porter,
Eases his burdened back, the while
Keeping his eyes on the Grocer's daughter.

Now, look ye ! I who have much to lose—
Rank, wealth and friends—like the load he brought her,
Would toss them under her little shoes,
To win that smile from the Grocer's daughter.

II.

A M Y S T E R Y .

JUST as the twilight shades turn darker,
There is a maiden passes me ;
Many and many a time I mark her,
Wondering who that maid can be.

Sometimes she bears her music, fastened
Scroll-like around with silken twine ;
And once—although she blushed and hastened,
I knew it—she bore a book of mine.

In cold or heat, I never passed her,
Beneath serene or threatening skies,
That she upon me did not cast her
Strong, full and steady hazel eyes.

Eyes of such wondrous inner meaning,
So filled with light, so deep, so true,
As if her thoughts disdained all screening,
And clustered in them, looking through.

Thus, day by day, we meet; no greeting,
No sign she makes, no word she says;
Unless our eyes salute at meeting,
And she says somewhat by her gaze.

Says what? At first, her looks were often
As cheering as the sun above;
Next, they began to dim and soften,
Like glances from a brooding dove;

Then wonder, then reproach, concealing
A coming anger, I could see:
I passed, but felt her eyes were stealing
Around, and following after me.

Before me once, with firm possession,
She almost paused, and hung upon

The very verge of some confession ;
But maiden coyness led her on.

Sometimes I think the maid indulges
An idle fancy by the way,
Sometimes I think her look divulges
A deeper sign—a mind astray.

This eve she met me, wild with laughter,
More sad than weeping would have been—
A pang before, a sorrow after ;
Tell me, what can the maiden mean ?

THE AWAKING OF THE POETICAL FACULTY.

ALL day I heard a humming in my ears,
A buzz of many voices, and a throng
Of swarming numbers, passing with a song
Measured and stately as the rolling spheres'.
I saw the sudden light of lifted spears,
Slanted at once against some monster wrong;
And then a fluttering scarf which might belong
To some sweet maiden in her morn of years.
I felt the chilling damp of sunless glades,
Horrid with gloom; anon, the breath of May
Was blown around me, and the lulling play
Of dripping fountains. Yet the lights and shades,
The waving scarfs, the battle's grand parades,
Seemed but vague shadows of that wondrous lay.

TO ANDREW JACKSON.

OLD lion of the Hermitage, again
The times invoke thee, but thou art not here;
Cannot our peril call thee from thy bier?
France vapors, and the puny arm of Spain
Is up to strike us; England gives them cheer,
False to the child that in her hour of fear
Must be her bulwark and her succor, fain
To prop the strength which even now doth wane.
Not these alone; intestine broils delight
The gaping monarchs, and our liberal shore
Is rife with traitors. Now, while both unite—
Europe and treason—I would see once more
Thy dreadful courage lash itself to might,
Behold thee shake thy mane, and hear thy roar!

TO ENGLAND.

LEAR and Cordelia! 'twas an ancient tale
Before thy Shakspeare gave it deathless fame :
The times have changed, the moral is the same.
So like an outcast, dowerless and pale,
Thy daughter went ; and in a foreign gale
Spread her young banner, till its sway became
A wonder to the nations. Days of shame
Are close upon thee : prophets raise their wail.
When the rude Cossack with an outstretched hand
Points his long spear across the narrow sea—
“Lo ! there is England !” when thy destiny
Storms on thy straw-crowned head, and thou dost stand
Weak, helpless, mad, a by-word in the land,—
God grant thy daughter a Cordelia be !

WHAT, cringe to Europe! Band it all in one,
Stilt its decrepit strength, renew its age,
Wipe out its debts, contract a loan to wage
Its venal battles—and by yon bright sun,
Our God is false, and liberty undone,
If slaves have power to win your heritage!
Look on your country, God's appointed stage,
Where man's vast mind its boundless course shall run.
For that it was your stormy coast He spread—
A fear in winter; girded you about
With granite hills, and made you strong and dread.
Let him who fears before the foemen shout,
Or gives an inch before a vein has bled,
Turn on himself, and let the traitor out!

WHAT though the cities blaze, the ports be sealed,
The fields untilled, the hands of labor still,
Ay, every arm of commerce and of skill
Palsied and broken; shall we therefore yield—
Break up the sword, put by the dintless shield?
Have we no home upon the wooded hill,
That mocks a siege? No patriot ranks to drill?
No nobler labor in the battle-field?
Or grant us beaten. While we gather might,
Is there no comfort in the solemn wood?
No cataracts whose angry roar shall smite
Our hearts with courage? No eternal brood
Of thoughts begotten by the eagle's flight?
No God to strengthen us in solitude?

NOT when the buxom form which nature wears
Is pregnant with the lusty warmth of Spring;
Nor when hot Summer, sunk with what she bears,
Lies panting in her flowery offering;
Nor yet when dusty Autumn sadly fares
In tattered garb, through which the shrewd winds sing,
To bear her treasures to the griping snares
Hard Winter set for the poor bankrupt thing;
Not even when Winter, heir of all the year,
Deals, like a miser, round his niggard board
The brimming plenty of his luscious hoard;
No, not in nature, change she howsoe'er,
Can I find perfect type or worthy peer
Of the fair maid in whom my heart is stored.

SPRING, in the gentle look with which she turns
Her sunny glance on all, indeed I find;
And ardent Summer in the roses burns
Of her twin cheeks, and from her gracious mind—
Like rare exotics nursed in precious urns,
With cultured taste and native grace combined—
Her teeming thoughts arise: Too well she learns
This summer sweetness! Generous Autumn, bind
A deathless chaplet round her queenly brow;
For like thy own, in boundless charity,
Her heart is filled with motives frank and free,
Her hand with alms. Alas! I see it now;
From thee, cold Winter, all her fancies flow,
Who, rich in all, will nothing give to me.

EITHER the sum of this sweet mutiny
Amongst thy features argues me some harm;
Or else they practise wicked treachery
Against themselves, thy heart, and hapless me.
For as I start aside with blank alarm,
Dreading the glitter which begins to arm
Thy clouded brows, lo! from thy lips I see
A smile come stealing, like a loaded bee,
Heavy with sweets and perfumes, all a-blaze
With soft reflections from the flowery wall
Whereon it pauses. Yet I will not raise
One question more, let smile or frown befall,
Taxing thy love where I should only praise;
And asking changes, that might change thee all.

I'LL call thy frown a headsman, passing grim,
Walking before some wretch foredoomed to death,
Who counts the pantings of his own hard breath;
Wondering how heart can beat, or steadfast limb
Bear its sad burden to life's awful brim.

I'll call thy smile a priest who slowly saith
Soft words of comfort, as the sinner straith
Away in thought; or sings a holy hymn,
Full of rich promise, as he walks behind
The fatal axe with face of goodly cheer,
And kind inclinings of his saintly ear.
So, love, thou seest in smiles, or looks unkind,
Some taste of sweet philosophy I find,
That seasons all things in our little sphere.

NAY, not to thee, to nature I will tie
The gathered blame of every pettish mood;
And when thou frown'st, I'll frown upon the wood,
Saying, "How wide its gloomy shadows lie!"
Or, gazing straight into the day's bright eye,
Predict ere night a fatal second flood;
Or vow the poet's sullen solitude
Has changed my vision to a darksome dye.
But when thou smil'st, I will not look above,
To wood or sky; my hand I will not lay
Upon the temple of my sacred love,
To blame its living fires with base decay;
But whisper to thee, as I nearer move,
"Love, thou dost add another light to day."

How canst thou call my modest love impure,
Being thyself the holy source of all?
Can ugly darkness from the fair sun fall?
Or nature's compact be so insecure,
That saucy weeds may sprout up and endure
Where gentle flowers were sown? The brooks that
crawl,
With lazy whispers, through the lilies tall,
Or rattle o'er the pebbles, will allure
With no feigned sweetness, if their fount be sweet.
So thou, the sun whence all my light doth flow—
Thou, sovereign law by which my fancies grow—
Thou, fount of every feeling, slow or fleet—
Against thyself would'st aim a teacherous blow,
Slaying thy honor with thy own conceit.

WHY shall I chide the hand of wilful Time
When he assaults thy wondrous store of charms?
Why charge the gray-beard with a wanton crime?
Or strive to daunt him with my shrill alarms?
Or seek to lull him with a silly rhyme:
So he, forgetful, pause upon his arms,
And leave thy beauties in their noble prime,
The sole survivors of his grievous harms?
Alas! my love, though I'll indeed bemoan
The fatal ruin of thy majesty;
Yet I'll remember that to Time alone
I owed thy birth, thy charms' maturity,
Thy crowning love, with which he vested me,
Nor can reclaim though all the rest be flown.



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Author

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